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Career vs. Marriage:

Perceptions of Professional Black Women Employed in Higher Education

(TITLE)

BY

Temetria D. Hargett

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF


M.S. College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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ABSTRACT

Age of first marriage for American women has been on the rise and Black women possessing higher education seem to top the charts of this growing trend. The review of recent literature articulates an increase in marriage ages for Black women that seem to correspond to educational attainment. Through interviewing, the researcher found that the issue of career/marriage balance for professional Black women employed in higher education was relevant; findings from the present study specified obstacles to balancing career and fostering relationships that may end in marriage. An analysis of barriers to marriage for six professional Black women employed in higher education and suggestions for future research along with recommendations for institutional leaders are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Philippians 4:13

I thank my Lord and Savior for removing doubt and insecurities during the completion of this work. Sure, this project was challenging but it wasn't anything my God and I couldn't handle together.

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Roberts, Dr. Wallace, Dr. Pearson, and other faculty and staff I've consulted including Dr. Harden. I appreciate the time you took out of your very busy schedules to make sure this learning experience was all it could and should be. Thank you also to professors and role models who taught me that anything is possible if I only believe.

Much gratitude is also extended to the participants of this study. Thank you so much for allowing me to receive a glimpse into your lives and what you've experienced concerning such a sensitive area of life – love and relationships. I appreciate your sincerity.

I would like to thank my parents, Unessee Hargett, II and Thelma Hargett for showing me Christ's love. I love you both. I would also like to thank my brothers, Unessee III and Adrian, for they are the joy of my life.

I am blessed to have friends and family who have supported and encouraged me through everything. Thank you.

DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my mother who showed me how to love unconditionally.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The women's rights movement provided women with opportunities outside the home and created a generational rift between those preferring more traditional roles for women and those supporting a woman's decision to now choose education and career. Certainly, limited options were available to women before the women's rights movement; however, employers and the institution of higher education were forced to recognize men and women as equals. Though much work is still needed, men and women are promised leave for childrearing (*Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993*), promised equal pay for equal work (*Equal Pay Act of 1963 & Civil Rights Act of 1964*), and guaranteed an equal opportunity at a quality educational institution (*Title IX* in the Education Codes of 1972). However promising the future may look, today's career oriented women are often faced with a decision: career or marriage.

In spite of this challenge, today's women obtain more Master's degrees than men and are closing the gap with Doctorate degrees conferred (U.S Department of Education, 2005), propelling them into careers traditionally held by White men. Specifically on college and university campuses, higher education is witnessing an administrative "facelift" that now boasts an increase of sexual and ethnic minorities as faculty, deans, directors, provosts, presidents, and other high-ranking positions. Once in these positions of power, women not already in committed relationships before the high status is achieved may find that the road to the top is a lonely one. Black women, specifically, may find the road to be the loneliest as they are a minority twice and have inherited roadblocks that include the decreased availability of eligible Black men as partners,

institutionalized racism in the workplace, and a nonexistent support system on which to rely. Romantically, she's reached a dead end.

Some difficulties of forming meaningful relationships in today's professional world have caught the attention of television show producers and movie-makers, thus infiltrating popular culture. Television shows such as "Girlfriends," which broadcast from 2000 to 2008 (*Jet*, 2008), depict the challenges Black women experience as they attempt to form long-term relationships that lead to marriage while simultaneously maintaining their professional careers. The show is able to engage audiences in an "open, honest exploration of the hot-button issues about family, friends, relationships and life facing women today" (p. 48), and the show's successes have been recognized with three consecutive NAACP Image Award nominations for Outstanding Comedy Series (p. 49). In its fifth season, the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame, Inc. honored the show for its "outstanding performance and production" and "positive presence, influence and portrayal of African-Americans" in television ("Black Filmmakers," 2005, p. 46).

"Girlfriends" depicted successful attorney, Joan Clayton, in her quest for romance. Throughout the show's eight seasons, Joan advanced through a series of relationships, each leaving her dissatisfied and wondering if she'll ever get married. Joan emerged, life-like and relatable, on the television screen as a "top-notch attorney who is knocking at the door of 30 and feels she has everything going for herself in life except a man" ("Girlfriends," 2001, p. 58). Although the popular comedy dramatizes many scenarios, a few of Joan's relationship failures were attributed to discomfort with the idea that the romantic interests did not match Joan's accomplished status or income and Joan's personal struggles with leaving behind promising career opportunities to pursue a more

serious relationship. In this last scenario, the decision of career or relationship was made very clear and many of the difficulties surrounding relationship formation for professional Black women became concrete.

Purpose of the Study

Considering the numerous professional and educational opportunities available for Black women, the present study seeks to examine the perceptions of professional Black women in Higher education in relation to the career vs. marriage debate. Recent studies have shown that the age at first marriage has increased for women (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001; Dobson & Houseknecht, 1998) in line with an increase in education (U.S. Census Bureau), suggesting an either/or paradigm with marriage and education. Astonishingly, even girls in grades 6-8 are aware that educational and career aspirations influence their perceived marriage age and age of first birth (Schreck, 1998). Realizing that education may not be the only deterrent to marriage, the present study seeks to reveal challenges unique to Black women simultaneously maintaining a career *and* pursuing a relationship that leads to marriage.

Recognizing that little data exists to examine all of the potential challenges of interest, a qualitative research design was applied. Leedy and Ormrod (2005) explained the usefulness of qualitative research thusly: “When little information exists on a topic, when variables are unknown, when a relevant theory base is inadequate or missing, a qualitative study can help define what is important—that is *what needs to be studied*” (p. 134). Indeed, the researcher hoped to take a phenomenon first observed in the media then personified within her own daily interactions: the reoccurring instances of Black women serving as Deans or Directors with Master’s degrees or higher, certainly

successful women in modern terms, living continued single lives. The present study begins the intellectual conversation regarding this observation.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the present study:

1. To what level is the either/or paradigm of career vs. marriage still relevant to Black females employed in higher education?
2. What are the perceptions of Black female professionals employed in higher education concerning the concept of marriage?
3. What are some specific barriers Black females employed in higher education face when it comes to forming relationships that may end in marriage?

Statement of the Problem

Evident in recent decades, ages of first marriage have dramatically risen simultaneously with the decreased likelihood of ever marrying (Crowder & Tolnay, 2000). "Although these trends have been apparent for the U.S. population as a whole, the recent retreat from marriage has been particularly pronounced among African American women" (Crowder & Tolnay, 2000, p. 792). Several theories exist in response to this knowledge; however, few studies have focused solely on the Black woman's experience to explain some of her challenges concerning the career/marriage imbalance.

Concerning career/marriage balance attainment, recent research reveals that "[t]he treatment of women of color in the workplace has profound effect on women's ability to strike a balance between fulfilling work responsibilities and satisfying personal obligations and needs" (Center for Women Policy Studies, 1999, p. 3). In the most basic of interpretations, "needs" could be explained in Maslow's (1954) theory of human

motivation with his hierarchy of needs. Described, the third level of needs is for belongingness and love and includes friendships, romantic interests, and other social opportunities. Maslow describes these needs in terms of males:

If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, ...

Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal (p. 89).

The problem herein stands that women of color generally have difficulties with work/life balance and may disproportionately nurture careers to possibly fulfill other needs in Maslow's hierarchy and deny, knowingly or otherwise, healthy and welcomed opportunities to pursue romantic relationships. Though self-respect and the esteem of others (esteem needs) and a desire for self-fulfillment (need for self-actualization) are typically met through a satisfying career, needs of belongingness and love should ideally come first (Maslow, 1954). "Freud's maxim of psychological health, "Lieben und Arbeiten" ("to love and to work"), [also] suggests harmonies, not divisions, between career and relationship domains" (Lucas, 1997, p. 130).

Limitations of the Study

Participants – The current study was an examination of the experiences of professional Black women as deans or directors at four predominantly White institutions; therefore, the experiences of other minority women, White women, and men were excluded.

The researcher began with the premise that people do not consciously choose to live without the companionship of a romantic interest but desire marriage despite the

reported negative aspects of such unions (Glenn, 1998) and alarming divorce rates. In an empirical analysis describing the roots of happiness, love and marriage, work, and personality are the three variables found to be most strongly related to overall happiness (Weiten & Lloyd, 2005). However stressful relationships and marriages may be, a key ingredient in life satisfaction is love.

Finally, the researcher chose to study professionals with a heterosexual identity. The complications surrounding marriage rights for homosexual couples were not presently included.

Data Collection – The findings are not generalizable as descriptions of what other professional Black women in higher education experience with regard to the career/marriage balance; however, they are generalizable as descriptions of what any professional Black woman in higher education can or might experience, given that she is engaged in a similar set of circumstances.

One limitation to interviewing is that oftentimes the interviewees are able to describe themselves through their ability to relate to their peers (Gillham, 2005). In reflecting upon their past experiences, participants may reconstruct past events to fit with their present life experiences (Hareven, 1982). Also, participants may choose not to disclose information to the researcher, making research conclusions more difficult to determine.

Because the research topic has been introduced to academic circles possibly for the first time, the list of potential aspects of the career/marriage paradigm may be incomplete. Information on the participants' parents' marital status was not included nor were the participants asked to reflect on their childhood memories of home. As

Goldstein and Kenney (2001) noted, “Other factors besides the education of women – economic booms and busts, changing social attitudes, and changing labor markets – make it difficult to analyze the temporal association between women’s education and marriage” (p. 509). Simply stated, wide ranges of variables exist and should be considered.

While objectivity was the goal for this research project, it is argued that “an objective approach to studying human events—interpersonal relationships, social structures, creative products, and so on—is neither desirable nor, perhaps, even possible” (Eisner, 1998; Moss, 1996; Wolcott, 1994; as cited in Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 133). Participants, however, responded to questions that conceptualized topics described in the review of literature; each factor contributing to the enduring singleness of professional Black females specifically employed within higher education.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms provide operational definitions for the purposes of the present study.

1. African-American/ Black

The term “Black” will be used instead of “African-American” to describe groups of African-descent living in the United States. Though the terms “Black” and “African-American” are interchangeable, “Black” is preferred because it “reflects the broader African diaspora and longer history than that associated with African American” and the term includes groups in the United States that do not use African American as a racial or ethnic self-description (Cashmore, 1996, 13-14). The U.S. Bureau of the Census concurs, defining “Black” to include people indicating their “race” as “black or Negro” or reporting entries such as African American, black Puerto Rican, Jamaican, Nigerian,

West Indian, or Haitian (Cashmore, 1996). The term is capitalized to distinguish between the color and a term designating a group of people.

2. Caucasian/ White

“A name introduced by J. F. Blumenbach in 1795 to designate one of the “five principal varieties of mankind.” Europeans were classified as Caucasians. The name was chosen because Blumenbach believed the neighborhood of Mount Caucasus, and especially its southern slope, produced the most beautiful race of men, and was probably the home of the first men. Caucasian has continued to be used as a designation for white people in to the twentieth century, although there is no longer any scientific justification for the practice. The distinctive characteristics of white populations need nowadays to be expressed statistically in terms of the frequency of particular genes, blood groupings, etc. Apparent similarities in appearance may be the basis for social classifications but are of little use for biological purposes” (Cashmore, 1996, p. 68).

3. Marriage

“The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife. Although the common law regarded marriage as a civil contract, it is more properly the civil status or relationship existing between a man and a woman who agree to and do live together as spouses. The essentials of a valid marriage are (1) parties legally capable of contracting marriage, (2) mutual consent or agreement, and (3) an actual contracting in the form prescribed by law” (Garner, 1999, p. 988).

4. Oppression

“Any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality,

nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States” (Collins, 2000, p. 4).

5. Religiosity

“People’s adherence to the core beliefs and rituals associated with worship of a divine figure or figures” (Mattis, 2005, as cited in McLoyd, V., Hill, N., & Dodge, K., 2005 p. 189).

6. Spirituality

“A belief in the transcendent nature of life (i.e., to the notion that existence is not limited to the physical or observable world); to a belief in the sacredness of life; and to a consequent quest to live a life of goodness and caring” (Mattis, 2005, as cited in McLoyd, V., Hill, N., & Dodge, K., 2005, p. 189).

Overview of the Study

Chapter II contains a review of prior and current literature related to the topic of Black professionals in higher education and their educational attainment, career development, Black feminist theory and identity development, spirituality within the Black culture, and current relationship trends among Blacks. Chapter III provides an overview of the methodology used in the current research including a description of the sample population and research sites, survey instrument, the data collection process, and treatment of the data. Chapter IV presents the findings of the current research. Chapter V offers a discussion of the findings, explains the significance of the findings, and suggests recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature will focus on instances of Blacks in higher education as faculty and students, career development for Black women, Black women's identity development, spirituality, and current relational trends. Although limited, some researchers have noticed that Black professionals in higher education are underrepresented (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, 2007; Harvey, 2002; Benjamin, 1991) and experience unique issues surrounding their careers that impact their relational patterns (Hattery & Smith, 2007; Coontz, 2006; Goldstein & Kenny, 2001; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000).

Researchers are now studying how the prospect of education and a professional career affect the likelihood of a Black woman's age at first marriage (Dobson & Houseknecht, 1998; Rubenstein, 1997; Manning, 1995). The following is a review of current research related specifically to Black women and the issue of how education and a professional career impact marriage.

Higher Education

As faculty, Blacks were not well represented in higher education. Harvey (2002) found that

[W]hile the number of African American male faculty members has increased from 12,483 in 1989 to 14,061 in 1997, the rate of growth over this period of time is the lowest of any underrepresented group, as defined by either race or gender. The 12.6 percent rate of increase for African American males compares to growth

rated during the same time period, of 27.2 percent for African American females, and 30.2 percent for Hispanic males (p. 32).

Overwhelmingly, White males remained most represented as faculty although that representation dropped 4% between 1989 and 1997.

The editors of the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2006) had similar findings. In a survey of the nations' highest-ranked research universities, highest-ranked liberal arts colleges, and flagship state universities, the editors reported few colleges and universities that employed Black faculty above the national average of 5.2% which Benjamin (1991) also attested. Concerning Black women, Collins (2000) wrote, "Since the 1960s, U.S. Black women have entered faculty positions in higher education in small but unprecedented numbers" (p. 16). According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, liberal arts colleges employed more Black faculty than the three institution types mentioned. The editors also noted, however, that this accomplishment seems trivial when the number of Black faculty members on a particular campus was compared to the population of Blacks in that state. Most institutions were far from matching the state's population of Blacks employed as faculty (Black Faculty, 2006).

The cause for the under-representation of Black faculty in higher education appeared to be threefold: a sharp decline in Doctorate recipients who were Black, Blacks entered academic employment at a smaller percentage, and Black Ph.D.s had the lowest faculty promotion and tenure rate of any group (Benjamin, 1991). The absence of Black male faculty deprives Black male students of role models and denies White students the opportunity to learn the unique "life experiences and personal interactions that are very different from their own" (Harvey, 2002, p. 35).

For students, needs pertaining to race and gender are becoming more prominent. The college and university setting represents a society that historically accommodated men; however, men are now outnumbered and often outperformed by their female counterparts. This seemed to be the trend at many institutions of higher learning across the nation. According to the U.S. Education Department's statistics, nationally, 58% of undergraduates are women (Wilson, 2007). Schools traditionally known as male institutions, such as Harvard University, are now accepting more women as students.

Proponents of the influx of women recognized this shift in gender demographics for colleges and universities as a testament to women's hard work in the classroom. Research showed that females were "more likely to take college preparatory classes, enroll in college immediately after high school graduation, and earn a Bachelor's degree" (Wilson, 2007). While their male counterparts were going to the gym, watching TV, parting, and playing video games, women were earning better grades, holding leadership positions, studying more, and earning more honors and awards. Female students were also more likely to be involved in clubs/organizations, spend time volunteering, and were less likely to miss a class due to oversleeping. Wilson (2007) also acknowledged parents who noticed differences between their son's and daughter's commitment to education and complained that sons did not seem as dedicated to their studies.

Increased female enrollment within higher education should not seem extraordinary due to continued sexism and classism. One analyst explained that even though more men were not seeking higher education, the men affected represented lower-income backgrounds and minority groups. Towards the top of the "socioeconomic totem pole," the number of men and women attending college and receiving degrees was more

equal. Sexism also played a role because men continued to earn more than women in the workforce and had more prestigious, supervisory jobs (Wilson, 2007).

To offset the demand for males and make higher education more accessible for all students, many colleges and universities have targeted minority populations to attract students of different racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds more heavily. Noteworthy within these efforts are the implementation of remedial courses, provisional admittance programs, the creation of departments and divisions to retain minority students, the formation of student-led clubs and leadership organizations designed for minority students, and other outreach programs (Wilson 2007). More inclusive campus environments enabled students to succeed, however, Black men's progress in higher education was steady and remained tenuous (Harvey, 2002).

To fully understand Black men's representation in higher education, it is first necessary to know high school completion rates since a high school diploma is often the prerequisite for college attendance. Statistics from 1998 were most recent at the time of Harvey's (2002) publication and showed that Black males had a 67.5% completion rate as compared to 78.4% for Black women, 78.8% for White men, and 54.3% for Hispanic men. In the same year, the gender gap with high school completion for Blacks widened to almost 11% due to the increase in completion rates among women and the decrease among men (Harvey, 2002). With respect to college, data analysis of the 20-year period between 1978 and 1998 revealed a slow increase in the enrollment of Black males (31.9% to 38.2%). Black females, however, began the period with 28.2% enrollment in 1978 and remarkably increased enrollment in 1998 (42.4%) overshadowing the progress of Black men (Harvey, 2002).

What's more, Harvey (2002) offered several hypotheses for why Black men might not seek higher education as readily: undisclosed and unfamiliar enrollment processes that made military service more appealing; opportunities for employment with high school diplomas; discouraged academic achievement from the hip-hop culture; and disbelief that traditional routes to higher education, stemming from lingering racism, were not open to them. In spite of these economic, cultural, political, and social circumstances and conditions, achievements Black men have shown in regard to higher education are encouraging yet indicative of much needed progress.

As alluded to, the success of Black women in higher education was especially impressive when compared to Black men. Data from the 1976-77 academic year to the present indicated that Black women have consistently obtained more Master's degrees than their male counterparts. Beginning in the 1989-1990 academic year, Black women even earned more terminal degrees than did Black men and have continued to do so ever since (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). In the 2004-05 academic year, Black women earned 2,007 terminal degrees (7.8% nationally) compared to 1,049 such degrees earned by Black men (3.9% nationally). Cole (2008) affirmed, "African-American women in particular are acquiring higher degrees in record numbers" (p. 110).

Evident in Black women, "more young women, such as graduating high school seniors and first-year college students are aiming to get higher educational training" (Bronzaft, 1991; Murrell, Frieze, & Frost, 1991; as cited in Dobson & Houseknecht, 1998, p. 207), much more rapidly than their male counterparts (Harvey, 2002). Such training allows for the development of careers as "[h]istorically, educational opportunity has offered the most effective route to participation and upward mobility" (Harvey, 2002,

p. 13). Black women have made tremendous strides in the professional world, substantiated through career development patterns.

Career Development

Arguably, access to education shapes job opportunities as seen in requirements typically based on credentials and training (Hattery & Smith, 2007) and career development is “the sequence of occupations, jobs, and positions in an individual’s life,” beginning with formal education and ending in retirement (Super, 1954, as cited in Conlon, 2004, p. 780). As educational opportunities have increased, career development for women has also evolved over the years to include opportunities beyond the stereotyped options of raising a family, being a seamstress, nursing, teaching, and writing. The most notable within this evolution occurred during World War II when women proved worthy and capable to fill thousands of positions previously held by men (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997). Although this victory was short-lived because “these women were either forced or chose to return to more traditional roles after the war, their contributions to the work force during the war opened the door to genuine career choice for the next generation of women” (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997, p. 7).

Specific considerations are made, however, concerning the career choices afforded to individuals when issues of gender, race, and class are introduced (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997; Hattery & Smith, 2007). For women, barriers that limit career choice include life experiences such as childrearing, her personal self-efficacy (“expectations or beliefs that one can successfully perform a given behavior” (Hackett & Betz, 1981, p. 327-328 as cited in Stitt-Gohdes, 1997)), environmental press (“the implicit and explicit cues an individual receives from others about how he or she should think, feel, and

behave” (Burnett, Anderson, & Heppner, 1995, p. 324 as cited in Stitt-Gohdes, 1997)), and sex discrimination or “sextyping” of occupations. Black women especially have been typecast and overrepresented in domestic labor (Hattery & Smith, 2007; Collins, 2000; Benjamin, 1991). Though a person’s perception of a barrier is his or her reality, government action is often needed in response to barriers out of her control such as racism and sexism.

Indeed, the government has taken action through the passing and implementation of several antidiscrimination laws and measures: *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin; *Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* coupled with the *Equal Pay Act of 1963* that prohibit sex discrimination in employment and compensation; *Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972*, which prevents sex discrimination; *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* that protects people with disabilities; the *Age Discrimination Act of 1975* that contains a general prohibition on age discrimination; and, finally, affirmative action designed to overcome the effects of prior discrimination (Kaplin & Lee, 1995). Among these, affirmative action is the most controversial because its goal is to “bar like discrimination in the future and to eliminate the discriminatory effects of the past” (*Albernale Paper Co. v. Moody*, 422 U.S. 747 (1976) as cited in Kaplin & Lee, 1995). Understanding the affirmative action debate provides insight to the challenges any minority career-driven woman is likely to experience in the workplace with regard to her job performance.

As Dyson (2007) stated, affirmative action is necessary to “balance the imbalance introduced as a result of the governmental exclusion of opportunity for African

Americans, Latinos, native (sic) Americans, and others” (p. 68). Dyson further explains that affirmative action is intended to

A) reverse the historic patterns of discrimination that have dominated and excluded African Americans and, subsequently, other people’s lives; B) make sure that the wide opportunity available to everyone else with white (sic) skin in American culture would be extended to African Americans; and C) continue to acknowledge forms of exclusion, and redress those with dispatch by the government and by private business (p. 68).

As an avid supporter of affirmative action, Dyson (2007) believes, “[a]ffirmative action is the mere beginning toward a larger, gigantic, more ennobling, edifying goal. And that is the goal of human equality, not only before the law, but in the custom and traditions, and in the folkways and mores, of American society” (p. 86).

Affirmative action has increased opportunities for minorities; however, many scholars disagree about the practice itself and whether it should continue; the dispute stems from perspectives on whether “modern American society ought to repair the wrongs of slavery and segregation” (Roberts, 2006, p. 64). Often it is assumed that with affirmative action Blacks and other minorities in positions of power or status are somehow undeserving of the position and were extended the opportunity solely on the basis of race to fill a quota. Affirmative action, some argue, is morally wrong because it gives the government permission to discriminate and hold people to a different standard based on race, sex, color, sexual orientation, etc., it becomes a double edged sword and marginalizes people, and the practice ultimately works against the interest of Black people (Dyson, 2007). Marginalization, as discussed, occurs when minorities are hired in

an effort to celebrate diversity but are later restricted from advancement opportunities, again on the basis of skin color.

In addition to being morally wrong, some social scientists believe that Blacks are no longer scheduled to benefit from affirmative action due to the rapid increase of the Hispanic population wanting their turn and the exhibited competitive spirit of the Asian population whose success is fueled by hard work, respect for education, and preparation, seemingly without affirmative action (Dyson, 2007). This view suggests that Blacks use affirmative action as a crutch and have an unhealthy dependence on the government for assistance when Blacks could apply themselves and become more competitive, more concerned with their own fate. Knowing employers and co-workers may share this philosophy is likely to be stressful and coupled with the desire to prove one's worth. A woman in this position could spend an exhaustive amount of time battling the misconception that she was hired due to her gender or race; leaving little time to pursue romantic relationships.

The other half of the affirmative action debate holds the government responsible for an intervention since it once was part of the problem: "Affirmative action is not about assigning worth to people who don't deserve it. It is about acknowledging the preexisting condition of worth that was *not* recognized" (emphasis in original, Dyson, 2007, p. 77). Here, it becomes understood that underrepresented groups are not provided opportunities undeservingly. As summarized,

To remain true to the theory of a differential system, an institution can modify standards or procedures only to the extent necessary to counteract the discriminatory effect of applying uniform standards; and the substituted standards

or procedures must be designed to select only candidates whose qualifications and potential contributions are comparable to those of candidates selected under the general standards (Kaplin & Lee, 1995, p. 416).

If anything, affirmative action changes how candidates are evaluated. Even though affirmative action was designed to “level the playing field” so to speak, challenges still exist once the position is attained. One of the biggest challenges, aside from feeling comfortable and supported in the position, stems from a professional Black woman’s ability to balance career and personal life decisions.

The Center for Women Policy Studies (1999) issued a report detailing the needs and perceptions of minority women in the United States’ workforce and how their “experiences affect their job productivity, commitment to their employers and the quality of their family lives” (p. 1). The findings revealed “the intrinsic link between the ability [of women of color] to balance work and personal life responsibilities and opportunities for career advancement” (p. 1) through focusing on five research areas: workplace cultures, workplace cultures and work/life balance, stress and work/life balance, coping strategies, and supportive workplace cultures. Notable within the results:

1. Women of color report that they are under pressure to work long hours—whether it is necessary or not—to improve their chances for promotion. Nearly half (47 percent) believe that there is an “unspoken message” in their companies that one must work long hours to get ahead (p. 2).
2. [N]early half (48 percent) of the women who are poised to crack the glass ceiling—directors and managers—feel that they must play down their race or ethnicity to succeed and 37 percent believe that they must play down their gender,

more than women in any other job classification. Further, one of five women (22 percent) believe they must play down both their race/ethnicity and their gender to be successful in their companies (p. 3).

3. A substantial number of women of color report that perceived racial discrimination (41 percent) and sex discrimination (35 percent) affect their efforts to strike a work/life balance, and 8 percent report discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (p. 3).
4. Women of color report that stress induced by such workplace realities as unsupportive managers, uncomfortable work environments, limited career advancement opportunities, excessive workloads and long hours affects their relationships with family members and limits their time for exercise, personal interests, and health promotion (p. 4).

As these alarming statistics suggest, pressure to work long hours, a perceived need to minimize race or gender, racial and sexual discrimination, and workplace stress were challenges to achieving career and romantic, personal life. The present study seeks to determine similar results for professional Black women employed in higher education specifically.

The Center for Women Policy Statistics also revealed gender differences in career development; women experience different challenges in their quest for career development than do men (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997; Lucas, 1997). Evaluating those differences from an identity development standpoint, Lucas (1997) postulated, "It is likely that women, generally more oriented toward attachment and connectedness [to parents] than men (Surrey, 1985), approach a task as individual and instrumental as

career decision making differently from men” (p. 124). Previous research remained inconclusive, however, on the degree of independence women needed to achieve from parents in relation to career commitment (Lucas, 1997). Although Lucas’ assessment of identity development revealed differences in career development and psychological separation for collegiate men and women, the research additionally suggested possible disparities for minority cultures.

One of such differences is related to the manner in which parents communicate issues of racism, teach discipline, and value hard work. Messages like these from parents are highly influential as

There really is no replacement for positive verbal persuasion from those adults whom a child respects and loves. ... The content of those messages will have a positive or negative effect on one’s self-efficacy and ultimately on who one becomes. Not only can positive parental verbal persuasion help a young person learn to develop coping behavior to deal with racism but it can also affect academic and career self-efficacy (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997, p. 34).

Similarly, mentorship and role modeling impact the development of any young adult, as “a variety of relevant models are critical to developing realistic and robust self-efficacy” (Bandura, as cited in Stitt-Gohdes, 1997, p. 33). Since self-efficacy refers to expectations and beliefs that one can successfully perform a given behavior, expectations should be reviewed.

Feminism, as Mansfield (2006) described, encourages women to pursue careers to become and remain independent of men. In doing so, women would be able to survive desertion from husbands and partners or leave at will due to newly found economic

independence. For this reason, Black mothers may have instilled in their daughters a message to be responsible and independent (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999) that may also be intrinsically linked to maternal work habits (McLoyd & Enchautegui-de-Jesús, 2005). McLoyd and Enchautegui-de-Jesús (2005) found that Black mothers and full-time employees may “demand higher levels of maturity and responsibility of their children in their efforts to balance employment demands” (p. 142). Given that Black women are more likely to be employed than Black men and Black children disproportionately live in female-headed households (Malveaux, 2008), this finding may attempt to explain Black women’s desire for independence and rationalize her efforts to perform at a level above what may be expected in the workplace.

Mansfield (2006) also suggested that laws protecting the general population of women at work and government-subsidized day care enabling women to also have families promote work, not a combination of work and family. Further, both feminist-instituted practices contribute to divorce rates as well as marriage (Mansfield, 2006). Critics of working-class women then attribute both the success of marriages and the increases in divorce rates on a woman’s ability to earn an income. Also inherent within the career vs. marriage debate is the critique of single women who choose to pursue careers. In an attempt to defend her own enduring singleness, Morgan (1999) reflected in response to a claim that career-minded Black women are selfish and remain single due to an inability to treat a man well:

I’m a little tired of our mothers bashing us for nothing more than growing up and becoming the women you raised us to be. Remember? Highly independent, powerful, and truly unafraid to be our best? ... I happen to think the way you

guys raised us was the shit and I'm not going to let you or my single status make me feel bad about any of it. Loving my career as much as any ambitious dude loves his doesn't make me inordinately selfish (pp. 134-135).

As this quote illustrates, career development and identity development may be intertwined and have an impact on relational success (Stitt-Gohdes, 1997) and are somewhat rooted in parental messages.

Another aspect of how role modeling may impact career decisions can be obtained from sorority culture, especially because "seeking strong, professional Black women as role models and possible mentors" is a motivating factor to join a sorority for Black women (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999, p. 549). For college-aged women, researchers examined messages obtained from Greek Life and family life to analyze young women's attempts to sort conflicting messages about obtaining a husband or seeking a career (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999). The authors recognized college sororities as avenues where young women received ideas about female accomplishment from media, parents, school, and peer groups. Results showed that White sorority women placed more emphasis on relationship formation than did their Black counterparts. Black sorority women placed more importance on exploring other avenues for achievement, possibly due to cultural differences (e.g., lessons learned from mothers) or the scarcity of eligible Black men. Since many Black women also dream of the fairytale ending, hopes of romantic relationships do exist for both Black and White sorority members. The difference lies in the strength of those feelings and the disbelief among Black women that sororities are the place to pursue goals of romance (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999).

Through examining social sorority culture, the authors concluded that White sororities focus on pairing (“getting a man”) whereas Black sororities place emphasis on economic self-sufficiency (“getting ahead”). The difference stems from many sources: the purpose for a sorority’s founding, the structure of the sorority, cultural differences, and the length of time dedicated to the sorority. The life-long commitment to Black sororities, versus short-term participation for sisters of the White sororities, enabled members to promote individual careers and to engage in community service projects. Strong Black womanhood (also see Morgan, 1999; King & Ferguson 2006), evident in leadership during the civil rights movement, and her inability to rely on marriage as a means of financial support leave marriage less desirable for Black women in many cases.

Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) explained cultural and historical points of reference showing the value placed on marriage and career for Black and White young females. They found that parents treated the aspect of marriage for their daughters differently: 18-22% of White parents set marriage as the primary goal for their daughters and only 4-6% of Black parents did the same. Also, 50-70% of White parents emphasized occupation as a necessity, compared to 94% of Black parents (Berkowitz & Padavic, 1999). Parents, mentors, and social organizations thus influence career decisions.

Identity Development

In addition to parental messages, mentorship, and social organizations, employment on some campuses poses specific challenges to identity development for Black administrators and faculty. Social isolation is likely to occur and impacts quality

of life when few Blacks are present on a predominately White campus (Benjamin, 1991).

Benjamin further noted the impending identity crisis in the words of an interviewee:

It puts the person in a position of cognitive dissonance. There is a lot of pressure to perform well that I don't think you find for a White person in the same situation. ... Not only do you want to do well for yourself—whatever the position dictates—but you are doing it as the first or only Black person. There is only the problem of trying to fit in. What do you do? On the one hand, if there are other Black's in the situation, you want to be a part of the Black group. However, if you are going to be successful, you have to be a part of the White group. You have all these identity issues to deal with. You want to move upward, doing the things that any person, Black or White, in that situation would do to be successful. Yet, you don't want your Black colleagues to think you are out for your own selfish motives, because you identify with them (pp. 126-127).

Festinger (1957) explained cognitive dissonance as “an antecedent condition which leads to activity oriented toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity oriented toward hunger reduction” (p. 3). Said differently, inconsistent (i.e., dissonant) behavior conflicts with what a person knows or believes (i.e., cognition) and creates discomfort. The discomfort produces pressure and thereby motivates the person to realign the behavior with the knowledge or belief. Related back to professionals within higher education, the dissonance impacts Black retention when “they are unable to successfully function because of the role strain and conflict and the impact of social isolation inherent in their predominantly White settings” (Benjamin, 1991, p. 131). Since Black students are overwhelmingly represented at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCUs), finding greater success through matriculation (Cole, 2008; Harvey, 2002), and the majority of Black faculty are employed at HBCUs (Harvey, 2002; Benjamin, 1991), analyzing social isolation in respect to Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) is especially important.

Black identity models are therefore useful in the attempt to chronicle experiences of Blacks discovering who they are in respect to the majority culture. The Sue and Sue model along with the models proposed by Cross and Jackson have several similarities; each was a multi-stage model that explored racial/cultural identity development, specifying important differences within minority groups. Cross's model, the Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience, consisted of four stages: the pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, and internalization stages. Jackson's Black Identity Model was also comprised of four stages: passive acceptance, active resistance, redirection, and internalization. The model developed by Sue and Sue was called the Minority Identity Development Model and had five stages: conformity, dissonance, resistance and immersion, introspection, and synergetic articulation.

Several differences also exist between the models Cross, Jackson, and Sue and Sue proposed. Whereas Cross and Jackson created multi-stage identity models that described the Black experience, Sue and Sue's model was more general and applicable to other minorities. In addition, Sue and Sue presented their Minority Identity Development Model as a tool for counselors, enabling them to understand "minority client attitudes and behaviors" versus a comprehensive theory of personality development. Boundaries between their five-stage processes are unclear and blend with one another. Both the Cross and Jackson models compared the Black experience in relationship to that of the

majority White culture while Sue and Sue's model took the comparison to the next level, comparing the minority to the majority culture and also to other minority cultures. While understanding these developmental theories is important, Black women have had additional challenges because they are minority and female.

Black Feminist Theory

Developmentally, the Black woman's experience has necessarily been separated from that of men and from women of other ethnic backgrounds, in line with criticisms of early feminist thought that was considered "racist and overly concerned with White, middle-class women's issues" (Collins, 2000, p. 5). Born out of the discovery of Black women's past voice used to foster past and present activism, Black feminist thought was created and the concept of Black women's intellectualism is not new. Collins (2000) writes, "Moreover, while Black women historians, writers, and social scientists have long existed, until recently, these women have not held leadership positions in universities, professional associations, publishing concerns, broadcast media, and other social institutions of knowledge validation" (p. 5). Exclusion from the listed professions was characteristic of the oppression Black women in America have witnessed and continue to experience economically, politically, and ideologically. Oppression occurred economically due to "exploitation of black women's labor essential to U.S. capitalism" and overwhelming representation in low-paying service occupations; politically through prohibiting privileges guaranteed to White males such as voting, holding public office, and education; and ideologically with racist and sexist images that became "natural, normal, and inevitable," images used to justify their oppression (pp. 4-5). Images fundamental to Black women's oppression include those of "mammies, jezebels, and

breeder women of slavery to the smiling Aunt Jemimas on pancake mix boxes, ubiquitous Black prostitutes, and ever-present welfare mothers of contemporary popular culture” (p. 5).

As with many oppressed groups, the evidence of intellectual works by Black women has been concealed to enforce the beliefs of the dominant culture and maintain social inequalities (Collins, 2000). Overcoming oppression, as Black women are encouraged to do, evokes a spirit of independence that very easily becomes the source of a Black woman’s strength. The words of the earliest of Black feminists, Maria W. Stewart, who passed away in 1879, continues to challenge Black women to reject the negative images of Black womanhood and forge self-definitions of self-reliance for their very survival (Collins, 2000). Messages of independence and self-reliance have therefore been encouraged as the lifestyle choice for Black females for several generations.

Controlling images of the matriarch, however, label Black women as “unfeminine and too strong” (p. 76) and left single Black women, mothers especially, wondering if their strength prevented them from finding a male partner. Black women were also irrevocably “blame[d] for their children’s failures in school and with the law,” although Davis (1997) described the U.S. criminal system as an “‘out of control punishment industry’ that locks up a disproportionate number of U.S. Blacks” (as cited in Collins, 2000, p. 77). Relationship wise, Collins explained the consequences as such: “far fewer men [were left] for Black women to marry than the proportion of White men available to White women” (p. 77). Malveaux (2008) concurred, “Part of the reason why African-American households are so often headed by African-American women are economic and structural—African-American men are more likely to be unemployed or

incarcerated...” (p. 78). Also along those lines, Collins wrote that “The matriarch or overly strong Black woman has also been used to influence Black men’s understandings of ... masculinity. [Many] reject Black women as marital partners, claiming that Black women are less desirable than White ones because we are too assertive” (p. 77).

The premise for Black women’s oppression was born out of the institution of slavery as Collins (2000) explained: “[t]he convergence of race, class, and gender oppression characteristic of U.S. slavery shaped all subsequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, with employers, and among one another” (p. 4). More implications of slavery are further explored in the next section.

Spirituality

“A strong spiritual core has always contributed to the vitality of the African American community” (McAdoo, 2007, p. 97), a tradition that remained steadfast even after the inception of slavery. To ensure the slaves’ obedience to their new masters, slave owners commonly mixed enslaved Africans with different cultural and religious communities. Cultural barriers, such as language, would understandably prevent the slaves from banding together in an attempt to escape. “Despite these [cultural and religious] differences, the commonality of [the slaves’] experiences allowed them to create new African American cultural and spiritual forms in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States” (McAdoo, 2007, p. 98). The resulting religion allowed “enslaved Africans and their descendants to rely upon an African-based understanding of life, death, and creation to help them adjust to an unpredictable social environment” (McAdoo, 2007, p. 98). The strength of the Black church is ever-present. In 2001, the

American Religious Identity Survey found that only 8% of Blacks considered themselves without religious affiliation and the large majority of households reflected a denomination within Christianity.

The Black church not only “spreads the Gospel” and “saves souls,” as it is traditionally known, but it also assumes a social responsibility through “providing educational and employment opportunities, developing social support networks, encouraging political participation, and increasing psychosocial well being” (Martin & McAdoo, 2007, p. 128) for the community it serves. Specifically, research has shown that religious commitment and church attendance are significantly related to “academic achievement and intention to complete high school (Martin & McAdoo, 2007, p. 128). Also, “Black adolescents with a strong religious foundation have been associated with “less engagement in risk behaviors such as premarital sex and substance use” (p. 128). While it is true that the Black church is often considered the “cultural center and foundation” of the Black community (Lincoln & Mamiya 1990, as cited in Martin & McAdoo, 2007, p. 127), membership in the Black church also has its social, political and financial benefits. Other researchers share this sentiment and assert that religion is central for Blacks and “spirituality may have greater significance for African Americans than for members of other ethnic groups” (Mattis, 2005, p. 191). Black women, however, often have a slightly different experience within the church and many criticisms are offered for the treatment of women in the church.

For Black women, a number of studies have shown the positive effects of spirituality to include more life satisfaction along with a happier, less depressed outlook than those without religion and spirituality in their lives. In addition, “It is known that

religiosity and religious participation often enhance physical and mental health”

(McAdoo, 2007, p. 99). Single mothers have the added benefit of using the church as a refuge for support although “Both married and non-married African American women cope with difficulties, hardships, and lack of resources through the use of religion”

(McAdoo, 2007, p. 98). On the downside, however, “One element hindering the progress of Black religious communities is the continued suppression of women within the churches” (McAdoo, 2007, p. 99), evident through the predominant male leadership. The male dominant philosophy that pervades Black churches is also manifest in the way women are expected to engage in romantic relationships.

The reading of scripture clearly identifies a hierarchy within all households, regardless of racial identity. Christian women receive a message of obedience on two specific occasions in the Bible:

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Ephesians 5:22-24, King James Version).

The same instructions are rephrased: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Colossians 3:18-19, King James Version). As these passages illustrate, women are receiving a message to be submissive from a powerful and respected organization, the church, and traditionally male characteristics of hard-work and determination that propel women’s career successes do not translate well with family life when independence in

thought and actions are exhibited by women. For women with upward-moving careers, messages of submission are difficult to receive and in order to have a relationship where ideas of respect are mutual, household responsibilities, as conventionally known, may need to be reconsidered.

Current Relationship Trends

Indeed, ideology indicating the male as the “breadwinner” within American family life may be most destructive for the Black community (Hattery & Smith, 2007). Under patriarchy, a man’s power is derived from his ability to provide financially for his family; however, Black women have assumed this responsibility due to Black men’s poor labor force participation. Malveaux (2008) described the status of Black women in terms of this third burden, an “intersection of race and gender” related to “the way that the majority society marginalizes and demonizes African-American men” (p. 75). Through reviewing unemployment rates, disproportionate wages, and material struggles, Malveaux determines,

The difference in educational attainment between African-American men and women, and the difference in labor market participation, means that African-American women are less likely to marry than their white counterparts. College-educated African-American women also marry later than their white sisters do (p.78).

The increased ages of marriage and decreased chance of marriage in general may be explained in part by the realization that Black women were more likely to be employed and often received higher wages than their male counterparts (Hattery, & Smith, 2007). Because an underlying belief exists that men should be “financially superior” to women,

in cases where women instead served as economic providers, women were less likely to get married and stay married. This pattern is illustrated for Blacks in each social class from poor to professional couples (Hattery, & Smith, 2007).

Looking at the general population of women, however, Goldstein and Kenney (2001) sought to explain why an increasing number of women will remain single their entire lives or if they are simply choosing to postpone marriage until later in life, dispelling the myth that women with more education are less likely to marry. At higher educational levels, Black and White women alike are marrying at higher rates although they wait longer to do so. Goldstein and Kenney's (2001) research on women and career/marriage provided hope; "Whereas in the past, women with more education were less likely to marry, recent college graduates are not forecast to marry at higher levels despite their later entry into first marriage" (p. 506). Goldstein and Kenney (2001) also asserted that "marriage is increasingly becoming a province of the most educated, a trend that may become a new source of inequality for future generations" (p. 506).

Coontz (2006) had similar findings. In describing three "rules" that are no longer valid (or soon to be invalid) concerning modern-day marriage, Coontz dismissed the belief from the 1950s that women who postpone marriage might not marry altogether. Due to increased educational attainment and career advancement opportunities for women, the age of first marriage has naturally risen to a later average age of around 26. Coontz found that women with a Bachelor's degree married at an average age of 27 and that women with Master's or professional degrees marry at the average age of thirty. While increased education is a factor for increased marriage ages for Black women too,

the likelihood of never marrying for Black women with advanced degrees is greater (Hattery, & Smith, 2007).

From a historical perspective, highly educated women more commonly experienced lifelong single-hood in the United States (Cookingham, 1984, as cited in Goldstein, & Kenney, 2001). In 1997, Rubenstein concluded that American women in the 1990s married later than their 1970s counterparts but divorced less and spent more time with their children. The increasing number of couples that lived together before marrying, referred to as coupling, partly explained the increased marriage age for women (Rubenstein, 1997). In this type of living arrangement, many couples became comfortable and mimicked traditional married life so the appeal of actually being married was not as desirable. Traditionally, however, cohabitating couples made the decision to marry due to a desire to have children (Manning, 1995).

Manning (1995) noted contradictory research explaining the association between cohabitation and marriage. One study suggested that cohabitation itself could lead to marriage, referencing data from 1989 that found two-fifths of all couples lived together before deciding to marry. Opposing research suggested that cohabiting couples generally held less traditional views about marriage and childbearing, suggesting that women who decided to cohabit were also more accepting of childbearing while unwed. Regardless of planned or expected parenthood, cohabitation seemed to be the preferred choice for those less committed to marriage.

In lower-income Black communities, coupling can be traced back to welfare reform efforts initiated in the 1960s. In order to receive aid, poor Black women with children would refuse marriage, suggesting that "cohabitation has evolved as an

alternative to legalized marriage that allows poor families, both African American and white, to continue to receive assistance while retaining much of the same stability and advantages of marriage” (Hattery, & Smith, 2007, p. 48). Thus began the stated decline in Black marriages and the more widely accepted practice of cohabitation as a replacement for marriage.

Besides gender roles, educational attainment, and cohabitation, another factor that influenced marriage rates for Black women was the eligibility of Black men as marriageable partners. Hattery and Smith (2007) described “marriageable” as possessing educational credentials, being employable (and preferably employed) and otherwise possessing qualities Black women desire in marriage partners (p. 49). Instances of under-education, unemployment, and incarceration greatly reduced the marriageable pool from which Black women have to choose.

Interracial marriage, though not nearly as significant, also removes Black men from Black women’s access, replacing them with men from other nationalities. Publicly acknowledged through the use of media is the once highly controversial practice of interracial dating, portrayed in film as far back as 1967 with “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner.” More recently, the multifaceted dynamics of interracial relationships includes films such as “Jungle Fever” (1991), “The Bodyguard” (1992), “Corrina, Corrina” (1994), “Save the Last Dance” (2001), “Maid in Manhattan” (2002), “Guess Who” (2005), “Hitch” (2005), and “Something New” (2006). Collectively, these films challenge the status quo concerning past ideas of who we are able to love and reveal opportunities and threats in response to the decreased availability of eligible Black men for Black women to date and eventually marry.

Considering that a Black woman is less likely to date outside her race (Crowder, & Tolnay, 2000) and consequently marry interracial (Hattery, & Smith, 2007), few Black men that are her educational peer exist. The marriageable pool was reduced even more since interracial marriage became legalized (Hattery, & Smith, 2007). Statistics suggested, “by 1990, about 4.5% of the nation’s married African American men had non-Black spouses with the majority of these being white women. In contrast, marriages between African American women and non-black men, especially white men, have historically been much less common...” (p. 50).

Although many Black women would like to believe White women are taking the best Black men out of the marriage pool, “the impact of interracial marriage on the male marriage pool is relatively insignificant” (p. 51). Koball (1998), on the other hand, reviewed Black men’s commitment to marriage from their perspective, evidenced through the increasing ages at first marriage as compared to White males from the 1950s to present. Koball’s results showed three main factors for the increase in marriage age for Black males: increased education of Black parents, migration of Blacks out of the South, and increased enrollment in higher education.

Within Koball’s (1998) study, however, three different hypotheses emerged: the economic provider hypothesis, the adult-transition hypothesis, and the benefits of early marriage hypothesis. The Economic-provider hypothesis recognized men’s traditional roles as the economic providers within marriage and claimed that men were more likely to marry if they were employed full time, a fact that Hattery and Smith’s more recent 2007 research confirmed. The second, Adult Transition hypothesis, stated that interferences with taking on adult roles (including marriage) might increase the age at

first marriage for young men. Interferences mentioned in Koball's study included school enrollment and military service, of which, military service disrupted the pattern of enrolling in higher education following high school for Black men (Harvey, 2002).

The final, Benefits of Early Marriage hypothesis, stated that young men were more likely to delay marriage when the benefits of marriage decreased (Koball, 1998). Also, the benefits of marriage seem to be the general predictor behind changing marriage patterns (Koball, 1998; Francese, 2004). Francese (2004) confirmed this idea with statistics on the general population and added changing trends surrounding marriage to the discussion. In 2003, married couples consisted of 51.5% of households whereas three decades prior, married couples were clearly a majority of households at 69%. The fact that more young adults are holding on to their single status and that for every two marriages there is approximately one divorce are the primary and secondary reasons why instances of married couple households are declining. Further, the presence of economic disadvantages to marriage and the "sexual revolution" seem to point to an increasing apathy for marriage.

Additionally, Francese (2004) found that millions of reasonably good paying jobs in the manufacturing sector, once available to high school graduates, have disappeared. But, at the same time, the cost of a college or graduate education, so essential to getting a better paying job, has risen (p. 41).

An economic disadvantage of marriage, then, is the shared debt many young people would acquire due to increased costs in higher education. Other economic costs that fewer people appear to be able or willing to accept include two key elements of

successful family formation: education and housing. Francese (2004) warns, if those two expenses “keep rising much faster than the income young adults can earn, we should expect to get fewer married couples and consequently fewer married couples with children” (p. 41).

Conclusion

As the review of literature suggests, Black women are making more progress in educational attainment than Black men, reducing the pool of what some would consider eligible bachelors. Educational opportunity shapes career development, which is irrevocably linked to identity development. Parents, community members, social institutions, and religion alike provide experiences and ideas on the value of career development and how to engage in relationships. Relationships that are formed seem to be strained by career and educational attainment of Black women considering the patriarchal social norms designating the male as the head of household. Black males, in many cases, are unable to provide financially for families due to incarceration rates and unemployment. Interracial dating and cohabitation also impact relationship success although the effect of interracial marriages is relatively small.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The present qualitative study on career/marriage balance has as its primary focus the issues professional Black women in higher education experience that may negatively influence their career vs. relationship decisions. Qualitative methodology was selected to “embrace the challenge of turning familiar facts and understandings into puzzles” and to “generate questions that raise fresh, often critical awareness and understanding of problems” (Schram, 2006, p. 7). Indeed, the selected qualitative research design permitted the researcher to focus on phenomena that occur in the ‘real world’ in order to study those phenomena in all their complexity (Leedy, & Ormrod, 2005, p. 133). As mentioned in Chapter 1, the phenomenon in this case was the reoccurring instances of professional Black women employed in higher education with advanced degrees remaining single.

Participants

The sample population for the present study composed of six professional Black women, defined as possessing both a Ph.D. or other advanced degrees and current employment as a director or dean at colleges and universities. Purposeful sampling was used to “understand the meaning of phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants” (Merriam, 2002, p. 12), of which degree and position were especially important. Gillham (2005) described the advantage of elite interviewing, stating that it involves “talking to people in positions of power by virtue of their experience and understanding, making them especially knowledgeable about a particular area of

research” (p. 54). The present subgroup met the stated criterion and was targeted specifically due to their unique perceptions about personal career and marriage decisions.

Of the six participants, three were conveniently employed at the same institution, two worked for different institutions in the Midwest, and the final participant was located at an institution in the Northeast. Five of the women were employed within student affairs and the other was a faculty member. Ages ranged from 29 to 63 for the group. Two of the participants were single at time of interview, one was involved in a long-distance relationship, and interestingly, three were married. One married participant had adult children and a newlywed participant was pregnant. The final married participant was in an interracial marriage. The researcher sought to gain insight into the potential barriers to marriage for this group. Participants were aware of the voluntary nature of the present study and were encouraged to withhold responses to questions that made them uncomfortable.

Prospective participants were contacted directly by the researcher. In the first attempt, the researcher contacted six potential participants via an email that introduced the researcher, explained the study, and provided the consent form (see Appendix B). Interested parties were to reply with a suggested interview time or refer the researcher to another potential participant, a practice known as snowball sampling. Contact information was obtained for six women from exploring university websites in search of Black female professionals. From this search, one participant responded that she was busy and suggested an alternate interview time outside of the researcher’s time frame. The researcher then consulted peers and supervisors who made recommendations based on relationships they had formed with Black female professionals. Requests to

participate in research this time were answered by willing participants, possibly because the researcher was able to connect with the participant through a mutual acquaintance. The researcher was then able to conduct the six interviews needed. Brief descriptions of the research participants at the time of interview are included below:

Participant #1 is the Director of Multicultural Affairs at a Northeastern university. She has been in her current position for 2 years with no plans of starting a Ph.D. program. She received her Master's degree from a Midwestern university in Higher Education/Student Affairs in 2004 and she has been working in higher education for 6 years. At the time of interview, Participant #1 was in an interracial marriage of 7 months. She was 29 years of age.

Participant #2 was 45 years of age at the time of interview. She has been in a dating relationship for 14 yrs with no indication of marriage. After receiving her Master's of Science in Education degree in 1989, she began a career in community service before switching to higher education. She has spent the last 4 years as the Director of Minority Affairs at a rural, Midwestern university. She will hopefully defend her dissertation Fall 2008.

At time of interview, Participant #3 was employed at a rural, Midwestern university as the Assistant Director of Judicial Affairs for 10 months. In 1992 she received her Master's of Science degree in Education in the area of Guidance and Counseling and has since completed 15 years working in higher education. Participant #3 has completed her coursework in her Ph.D. program and will begin the first phase of her research soon. Her relationship status was single and she was 39 years of age.

Participant #4 was an Assistant Director of Student Activities for Multicultural and Leadership Programs. She was employed at a rural, Midwestern university for four years; two of those years were spent in her current position. She received her Master's degree in African American Studies in 1997 from an East coast university. She has spent 11 years employed in higher education and has begun considering enrollment in a Ph.D. program. She was not currently dating at the time of the interview and she was 35 years of age.

Participant #5 was the Associate Director in the Center for Academic Success for a Midwestern university, employed in that role for 20 years. She has been married for 39 years. Her two adult children and husband encouraged her to pursue her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology, which she completed in 1997. She was 63 at time of interview.

Participant #6 was married in July of 2007. The following month, she began employment at a rural Midwestern university as an instructor in African American Studies and Coordinator of Minority Teacher Education Association. Relationships with friends and peers she's established at the university have motivated her to consider enrollment in a Ph.D. program. Her age was 33 at time of interview.

Table 1.1 – Summary of Participants				
Participant #	Age	Marital Status	Location	Highest degree achieved
1	29	Married	NE	M.A.
2	45	Long distance relationship	MW	Ph.D. fall 2008
3	39	Single	MW	Ph.D. spring 2010
4	35	Single	MW	M.A.
5	63	Married	MW	Ph.D.
6	33	Married	MW	M.A.

Research Sites

The research sites for the current study were comprised of three mid-sized universities located in the Midwest and one mid-sized university located in the Northeast. Although 4 of the 6 interviews took place in the participant's office on her campus, descriptions of the cities in which the participants live give further insight into the research problem. The following is an overview of the city populations as well as social and religious opportunities and includes basic campus life information for each of the four research sites.

One Midwestern university, classified as a comprehensive research university, enrolled almost 21,590 undergraduate and graduate students for the 2004-2005 academic year, 15% of which were Black. The university was located in a city with almost 25,600 residents (2000 Census) that also hosted a community college and a technical school.

Concerning religious opportunities, only Protestant and Catholic churches, along with a Jewish synagogue and a Moslem temple exist. The city profile boasts several dining opportunities, 4 shopping centers, parks, golf courses, country clubs and public access to a lake.

In 2000, the second Midwestern city had a population of almost 18,560, 5.9% were Black. Fifty-two percent of the total population was female. Protestant churches, a Catholic church, and a church of the Latter Day Saints complete the worship opportunities. Two golf courses, a tennis court, a community theater, a YMCA, and a lake summarize available recreational opportunities and the city had 53 restaurants listed in 2008. Students have the option of a trade school, community college, and a university; the university enrolled nearly 13,600 in 2004. The minority population, consisting of all non-Whites, was 12.2%.

The total population for the final Midwestern city was almost 21,040 in 2000 with a Black population of 4.2%. More females reside in this city, 53.5% of the total population. The university, however, had an enrollment of nearly 12,180 in 2005 with a minority population of 12%. Students and faculty are able to enjoy dining at 35 restaurants; recreational activities at the museum and city park; and shopping on the historic city square.

The largest of the four cities was the location of the Northeastern university. The university itself had a population of fewer than 12,265 for the 2007 academic year. Three percent of the population was Black. While the city's population was 72,570 in 2003, the Black population was 3.6% in 2000. The area provides 60 restaurants, retail shopping, boating along the river and 5 parks for recreation.

Instrument

As expected with qualitative research, the researcher was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). Advantages of having a human instrument include the ability to be “immediately responsive and adaptive,” expand “understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses” (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). As Merriam (2002) noted, limitations may include biases that impact or otherwise influence the study.

Data Collection

The researcher used audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews for data collection. Questions were created by the researcher in advance (see Appendix E); however, the researcher asked questions in an order related to the participants’ comments and asked follow-up questions when appropriate. Six participants were contacted based on recommendations from their peers. From there, the researcher scheduled interviews with the research participants, transcribed those interviews, and inductively analyzed the information received. Inductive analysis challenges the researcher to “identify the recurring patterns or common themes that cut across the data” (Merriam, 2002, pp. 6-7).

The duration of each interview was 45 minutes to 1½ hours, length varying due to the amount of information the participant was willing to disclose. Only one interview was conducted via telephone due to the participant’s location outside of the desired driving distance of the researcher. The five remaining interviews were conducted at the participant’s location of choice; four chose her office, one invited the researcher into her

home. Taping the interviews ensured an accurate account of the participant's words and assisted in an accurate transcription. As another measure of accuracy, the researcher emailed the research participants after the transcriptions were complete, enabling each participant to review her transcription and answer any additional follow-up questions the researcher had.

Out of the three traditional sources of data in a qualitative research study (Merriam, 2002), the interview was selected. As Leedy and Ormrod (2005) suggested, the researcher's goal was to make the participants feel as though they were "simply engaging in a friendly chat with the researcher" (p. 184) that began with establishing and maintaining rapport. At the onset of the interview, the researcher engaged in small talk to "break the ice" and was careful not to reveal her perspective during the interview (2005). The described interview protocol made the interview a comfortable experience for both researcher and participant. Responses during the interview were uninhibited as opposed to other methods of data collection (Gillham, 2005).

Treatment of Data

Participant identities were protected throughout the process of conducting the present study. Confidentiality was secured through use of a numbering system to identify participants (ex: Participant #4 stated...). Signed consent forms, audio recordings, transcriptions, name recognition lists, and the researcher's written notes were secured in a locked location until the completion of the research project.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Participants were given the autonomy to answer the research questions presented ad infinitum, as candidly and thoroughly as they wished. Data from the interviews are presented within this chapter in thick description, a method that “presents the data in such detail that readers can see for themselves what is going on” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, pp. 285-286; Merriam, 2005). In addition, particular and general descriptions, along with interpretive commentary are used to illustrate the findings. Particular description is used in the *Participant Responses to Interview Protocols* and consists of exact quotes from the raw data; general description, “comments to the reader as to whether quotes are typical of the data as a whole” (Merriam, 2002, p. 22), is used in the *Summary of the Findings*; and interpretative commentary is included in the *Discussion* to indicate details and meanings that are salient for the author (Merriam, 2002).

Participant Responses to Interview Protocols

The following themes emerged as findings from the research interviews.

Research Question #1 asked: To what level is the either/or paradigm of career vs. marriage still relevant to Black females employed in Higher education?

The interview questions related to the theme addressed in the above research question were as follows:

1. Given your responsibilities, which take priority for you?
2. Citing your previous experiences, what advice would you give a young Black female in your position?

3. Will you share the role mentors played in your educational, professional, or romantic life?
4. Have you ever received messages from home that you have to work harder than everyone else to succeed or from work that you must outperform in order to be recognized or promoted?

When asked to prioritize her responsibilities, Participant #5, who was married, simply stated,

My number one priority is always my family.

Unmarried, Participant #4 had this to say about prioritizing her responsibilities:

I would say the job is up there pretty high. Because I am single, I do have a lot more focus on career and I also don't have any children. I would say I try to balance that so relationships with friends and family are really high, particularly friends because my family is far away. My spiritual life is very high also. I would say spiritual life, family, relationships, and then job are the priorities as I rank them. I think my spiritual life helps me in both relationships and in the job even though the job gets a lot of focus too—I work 8 hours a day every day.

Participant #2 shared advice she would give a young Black female in her position:

I would never tell anybody not to do what I do, "Don't become 45 without a man," because I'm happy. Just make sure that what ever you do, you're passionate about it. There are so many people that are doing a job just to be doing a job, "This is my major so I have to continue to do it," that's not the case [with me]. That's why it's just my personal opinion that a person should not get the Ph.D. until you've worked—I'd say a minimum of 5 years. My Masters' was in

guidance and counseling and I truly thought I was going to be in the community service area. I worked with run-aways and suicides and just got burned out and then came to higher ed. and truly loved it. Then I decided to get the Ph.D. If you go directly through, you don't know where life is going to take you. You don't know what you're going to do. I think you should work a few years to see if this is possible—don't be *scared* to jump out on faith. When I left here the first time, I left here without a job. I left here because I knew I could do all that I could do. I was over [a program that provisionally admits students into college] and the only job I could have taken would have been my boss' and she was still living. So [my advice is] don't' be scared to want *more*. Everybody tells me, "As soon as you get your Ph.D.," this is my boss, "As soon as you get your Ph.D. you're going to be gone." I like to hear things like that because I know that they think that I'm so ambitious and they know that I want to do more. I do, but I also have to think about what it is I want to do and how I want to do it. I do know that I'm not going to be a director for the rest of my life. I want to go higher but if I met the right *man* (emphasis in original), a directorship might be fine with me because then I would be able to enjoy it with somebody. I would have captured everything that I need to know about this particular job and would truly be able to love and be in a relationship and not have to worry about starting all over again, doing new programs and stuff like that. In one sense, I sound very content and very happy, but if I did find that partner, I would probably settle and then enjoy life with someone else.

Participant #4 described the role mentors play in her educational, professional, and romantic life:

In my life, I haven't had many formal mentors. I'm a person who likes to observe people and I'm like, "you're my mentor" –they don't know it. You get advice when you go to conferences and you meet people. Just recently I went to ACPA and there was an African American Women Summit as a pre-conference workshop and I went to that. The ladies there set me on fire! What I found uplifting about them is that there were four mentors for the day and out of those one was married with children. That was my question to them, "You're still single, how is that?" They were loving it. [Like them] I got to a point in my life where I was like "I can't sit around waiting to be married or waiting to have a relationship. I have to live my life as it is with the hopes and the desire and the intent of being open to a relationship." But to put off experiences and to put off planning or to base all of my decisions around trying to find a mate or finding someone to be with was seriously limiting my options and in some cases, somewhat robbing me of my ability to do what I really wanted to do. When I was living in St. Louis, for example, I wanted to leave my position. I lived in the St. Louis area for about 5 years but I had worked at two different schools. I wanted to leave the school where I worked. I did a job search but I had met someone so I limited my job search so I could stay in that area. The relationship didn't work out and the job that I went to was a lateral move which ended up working out. I went from being in housing to a position where I got experience in another field, the student activities field, which set me up for my current position here. I did

want to move out of housing but it wasn't a leg up, it was a lateral move. I could have advanced or found something in another area, something that career-wise would have been a bigger stepping stone had I searched at that time. When I searched two years later after being at the other school for a while, there were more limited options. Over my time here, during the last several years, I realized that basing all my decisions on whether I will or will not have a relationship or get married was unfair to me and was, in essence, stunting my ability to grow and to develop a life. Life is not just about having a mate but it's about living whatever life you're given, whatever cards you're dealt. It's about being happy about the fact that you have opportunities and experiences that you can take advantage of now. If you're so busy thinking about what you don't have, you don't realize what you do.

When describing her feelings on whether or not she was expected to go "above and beyond" her position description, Participant #1 shares stories to help paint the picture:

I think it is an unspoken expectation so no one would ever come out and say "I want you to go above and beyond this role, I want you to spend more than 40 hours a week in the position. It is understood that the job requires more than 40 hours and it is an expectation that I work some nights. The culture at my university is to work, work, work—the higher ed. culture is to work, work, work, if you're not married and especially if you don't have kids. If you don't have the excuse, "I have to go be with my kids; I have to go pick my kids up from school," the unwritten expectation is that you don't have anywhere else to be. People will always tell you, "We want you to be balanced, we want you to achieve work/ life

balance, and we want to make sure [you're comfortable in the position]," but it's not lived. The expectation is that you're pulling more than your weight and you're doing more than your share. It's not like you can have kids and retire but people will [adjust their work schedules when they have families]. Some women that I work with who are a little bit older and have kids, especially small children, will come in at 8am instead of 8:15. You have no idea how long they've been there. Some of them have been there since 7am. Some of them have been there since 8am. At 3:30, however, they are peacin' out even though office hours are 8:15-4:45pm. They're peacin' out to go home and spend time with their kids and things like that. There are a couple of people on the staff where I work who have dogs. They're like, "Oh, I have to go home and walk the dog." (excitedly) I respond, "Well, I have to go home and get the mail!" I mean, what am I doing? Get a crate! (laughter) There are some people though who have achieved amazing work life balance. They come to work, they do their job, they go home. Every now and then if there's an event on the weekend or something in the evening they'll participate in it and I really, really envy them the amount of work that they are not doing. I really envy them for being able to just go home and not care— go home and totally flip it. They're worried about being at home [whereas] I'm worried about all the things that I'm missing and what's not being accomplished. It was really my husband who was like, "You know what? I'm sure the university is not going to burn down. I'm sure students think it's cool that you show up to programs but they're not going to dislike you if you don't show up. If they don't like you then what are the consequences?" He doesn't

understand what the consequences are. Being in this role and not be liked by students—it's impossible to do that.

Participant #5 agreed but gained confidence from attending her high school:

In the back of your mind, you knew that. You knew that. Growing up in the segregated South, you knew you had to work hard. I think once I had that foundation from my high school, I just felt confident in my ability. I think they gave me that good foundation. I got my first teaching job and I just didn't feel it wasn't going to happen, in essence. I felt confident graduating from college; I felt confident when I came here and I came and applied programs. I felt confident that I could do what I set out to do.

Research Question #2 asked: What are the perceptions of Black female professionals employed in Higher education concerning the concept of marriage?

The goal of the second research question was to uncover the participants' thoughts on marriage including goals for marriage and peers' relationship trends. The following interview questions were used to identify themes within the second research question:

1. Did you think you were going to find a husband in college?
2. What are some of the trends you're noticing in your cohort of Black professionals concerning relationships?
3. How hopeful are you that someday you'll get married if marriage is a goal for you?

Participant #3 was heartfelt when asked if she thought she was going to find her husband in college:

Yes. Yes, I did. I just kind of thought that's what happens—you spend four years of your life on campus and you were going to meet him [there]. Yeah, I did. I

really did think that I was going to find my husband in college. It didn't happen.

It didn't happen.

When asked if she had any regrets, Participant #3 continued:

I don't think I have any regrets. I think everything happens for a reason. It happens according to how it's supposed to happen. I'm happy with the choices I've made. I made a lot of friends at the school [undergraduate] and I had a lot of experiences. I don't regret making my choice for the university I attended. No [regrets] because I have a lot of experiences as far as my career path and I think things happen the way they're supposed to happen. I've been in a previous job where I was in a metropolitan area and there were more opportunities for dating and marriage and I still didn't meet *the* person, the right one. I will say that I've met people but the relationships didn't work out. There were more opportunities for dating so I don't regret leaving my previous institution or leaving that area or any of the decisions I've made as far as my career [is concerned].

When asked about trends she's noticed within her cohort, Participant #3 had this to say:

I have seen more of my cohort that are single within the profession and it continues to get increasingly difficult [to find a significant other] as you get older. This is why I think your study is relevant because it does still happen. It's almost like, if you didn't meet and fall in love with that gentleman in your early 20s as you continue to grow—you're growing professionally, you're growing educationally—it becomes a little bit more difficult, especially if you're not in that circle. You would think that because you're in higher ed. you're around with other higher ed. professionals but it depends on location. It depends on what your

role is and how often you are put in those networking situations. I have found that many of my cohort are still single in the profession. I can't necessarily say that I see more interracial dating. I think more interracial dating becomes a possibility, especially if you're on a predominately White campus—again, location. If you want to branch out, you may have to because there aren't many men of color that are working on your particular campus. I can't say that there's an increase but I know that that has been a possibility and has happened for some professional women of color.

Participant #4 had positive attitude about her single state and remained hopeful that she would get married someday:

I'm always hopeful. I just try not to focus on it so much. There are a lot of things I've started to appreciate now. What I feel is that once I get married, I'll miss some of the opportunities that I have now. I want to fully experience and enjoy. A lot of times, my friends that are married will tell me that I'm lucky because I get to sit down and nobody calls me. They tell me, "You get to go off and buy whatever. I remember when I used to do that." I say to myself, "Well, Lord, let me enjoy this now because apparently I'm not going to be very happy when this lifestyle is over. I'm not going to be very happy." I've come to the point where I don't want to be married just to say I'm married. I want to be in a relationship with someone who loves and respects me. He would have to be someone I can speak well of all the time so I'm not like, "You were the end to my life. I didn't realize the life I had until it was gone." I feel bad about saying that but sometimes some of my friends make me feel like I've missed a bullet if marriage is as bad as

they say it is. A while ago, I was thinking, “Why would I want to be married when all of the married people I know have a tendency to complain about it?” They say things like, “He’s selfish. She doesn’t do this. The kids are bad. I never sleep. I never have any time to myself.” And they tell me, “You’ll find out when you get married.” It’s like they’re cursing you by saying, “You will have children just like you. You, too, will be unhappy when you get married.” I don’t want that. I don’t want to be unhappy. If I’ve waited all these years, I’m not going to wait and then be miserable.

Research question #3 asked: What are some specific barriers Black females employed in Higher education face when it comes to forming relationships that may end in marriage?

The following interview questions were affiliated with the themes identified within research question #3:

1. What were some of the obstacles you face(d) surrounding relationship formation?
2. What are some of the stereotypes facing professional Black women concerning relationship formation?
3. What is your definition of an eligible partner?
4. What role does spirituality play in your life?
5. What are your thoughts on the Bible’s guidance for relationships?
6. How accessible are your opportunities for social, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation?
7. How secure are you with your identity as a Black female? Do you feel as though you’ve ever needed to “act a certain way” in the workplace?

8. Do you feel as though your peers respect your position? Has affirmative action helped you get where you are or did you earn the position?
9. From what you can tell, have you experienced racism or felt disrespected in the workplace?
10. Do your supervisors respect you as an employee? What about the students?

Participant #2 shared the following personal obstacles to relationship formation:

Well, because of where we're located geographically, I have additional obstacles. One is the distance and a lack of African American faculty, administrators, and the like. I don't want to sound snobbish, but because you are at this particular position, you would not generally want a custodian or someone of that nature. So obstacle #1 would just be an absence of African American men in the area. Two would be that African American women, if they find something they truly like, and they're passionate about it, then you tend to over-work. I do know that when my boyfriend comes down here, I don't have a problem at all taking off and taking a few days to hang out but I think he understands my dedication to my job. So, another obstacle would just be that passion about your job and you have to make sure that you constantly do everything right. I don't necessarily believe that we're threatening or anything. I just think that we try extremely hard to make sure they know that we're doing a great job. Probably the last thing for me would be my other obligations. I am in what I consider to be two very big organizations. One is a sorority, (name omitted). ... Besides that, I'm in The Links, Inc., which is another organization for college educators, African American. I want to believe my outside affiliations sometimes put a damper on my time. (Author's note: The

Links, Incorporated is an international, volunteer service organization and not-for-profit corporation, established in 1946 for women of color “committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry” (The Links, Inc., 2008)).

In answering the question, “What are some stereotypes facing professional Black women concerning relationship formation?” Participant #4 commented:

I don’t know if this is just [applicable to] Black women but because I haven’t been married in my lifetime, I’m [assumed to be] a lesbian. I’ve never been married and if I’m not currently dating, then I’m a lesbian. A lot of people [also] automatically assume that I should have children. When I say I’m not married they don’t just say, “Oh,” they say, “And you don’t have any children?” I respond, “No, because there’s no man standing here.” Granted, a lot of women aren’t married before they have children but particularly because I’m a Black woman they’re surprised and shocked when I’m not married *and* I don’t have any children (emphasis in original). Another assumption is that you’re difficult, that you are intimidating. That one has always gone around. For Black women who have degrees—no man can approach you now. You have the kryptonite for Black men—you have degrees! Another is that there aren’t any good men out there, that you would not date someone who doesn’t have those degrees. There is a slew of [stereotypes] but those are some of the main ones. The perception is that you’re hard or that you’re overly strong. (jokingly) You know, I cry at the TV commercials! [Another assumption is that] You’re strong and independent. I am because I’ve had to be but anybody could be if there’s no one else around.

Because you're independent, that's what is keeping you from a relationship or you need to cut down on your standards. [If I were to say to someone] "But he doesn't believe in God," [they would say] "So what? He's available and he's interested." Again, when I was so focused on [having a relationship], and I was, you try to justify [being in a relationship when the person has qualities you don't like]. A lot of times people in relationships are upset with the man or upset with the woman in the relationship but for so long you've tried to justify things that have always bothered you. I'm like, "Didn't you ever notice that? Didn't he ever berate you before?" "Yeah, but I thought that would change when we got married." I'm like "How?" If you want something bad enough, sometimes people will go to any length to get it and that means ignoring the glaring "don't do this" signs. You're so afraid of the alternative, so afraid of being alone that you would be with anybody. Sometimes it works out and a lot of times it doesn't so you wind up in divorce court anyway.

Participant #3 describes her eligible partner as such:

I think he has to be understanding. He has to also be educated and when I say educated, he doesn't have to have the equal education that I have. When I was younger and in college and thought I was going to meet my husband, I used to say that all the time, "If I have a Master's, then he needs to have a Master's." I don't really believe that now. As long as he's educated in the sense that he's book smart and street smart [I'll be happy]. I just want him to have goals and plans. Also, I'm looking for someone I can spiritually connect with as well—that's also important. Also, [someone] that can support me in my career and understand that

he shouldn't be intimidated by me advancing in my career. I'm looking for somebody who's not intimidated by the fact that I'm a strong person who has goals and objectives and wants to move up.

Spirituality had the following role for Participant #5:

Very important, very important. God has brought me to where I am today. If it weren't for Him and my spiritual belief I would not be as far as I am. Through adversity, through suffering, through tragedy, He just brings you through it. If you have faith in Him even though you're going through bad times and hard times—I don't question His decisions. I ask Him for guidance when He makes a decision. My husband's parents died in the 1960s but he had two older sisters and he lost both of his sisters within a month of each other. They were like our mentors too—our guiding force. It really took a tear on my family but then again I think it made us closer. It helps you get grounded more. You get one shot at this life and you have to make the best of it. You can't wallow in self-pity because that's not His plan. Everything He's done and everything He's brought you from—look at all the blessings that have come out of that. We miss those we lose but we have to remember all the good things they brought to your life, remember all the values they set in your life. They would not have wanted you [to mourn]. It's a dishonor if you take their death and desecrate it by doing something stupid. That's not honoring the memory. God is most high in our lives.

Continuing in the theme of spirituality, Participant #4 shared her thoughts on the role spirituality plays in her relationships:

Spirituality plays the central role. To me, Christianity and a lot of the Biblical principles teach what relationships should be about. I think some people [misunderstand]. As I study for myself I realize there's a lot of stuff in there that if you don't read it, you could really be screwed. People may walk around thinking, "All this says is that the woman should be submissive." Really and truly, when you read it through, you find out where Dr. Phil and all those TV psychologists have stolen all their material from about healthy relationships. Yes, there are roles in a relationship but it's about mutual respect. It's about honoring and loving one another and thinking of one another before thinking of yourself. It's about being honest with one another, being supportive of each other's dreams, being kind, dealing with conflict, realizing the gift that one another have and why you should come together and how to choose a mate—all that's in there. I think people are a little too afraid to read it. If you do it that way [the Bible says to form relationships], you wind up having a better connection, having a better starting foundation than most people do. [Most people] are basing it off the world's knowledge of relationships, which is screwed up, instead of what I consider to be the original intent of relationships. ... Sometimes we get all this random information from people but you don't know who they are and we trust them because they're the authority on it. People always ask, "Well how do you know the Bible is authority?" I say, "Well, you're talking random advice from all these other crazy people you don't know, why won't you take advice from [the

Bible]?” Even if you don’t believe it is the Word of God, it is a book of wisdom that has lasted throughout all these years. Why wouldn’t you add that wisdom to Dr. Phil? (sarcastically) Lord knows he’s been around for 40-50 years, he must know. Oprah put him on TV so he must know.

When asked about opportunities for social, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation,

Participant #6 stated:

It’s okay. I don’t think I’m in an environment where I’m constantly fulfilled in that. It’s okay. It’s not what it actually could be. The only time I really get it is when I’m talking to my professional peers. We talk about some of our experiences in the classroom or experience in administration running programs. Outside of that, not a whole lot. I’m married to a football coach so if we do things together there aren’t a lot of couples [we visit with who are] in academia or in the same profession. I’m visiting a lot of his friends. We’re going to a baby shower this weekend for one of the coaches’ wives—you can imagine what those conversations are going to be like.

When asked to describe her identity in terms of whether she’s ever needed to behave a certain way in the workplace, Participant #2 stated:

Never. Never, and I just have to watch myself. I meet with my boss once a month and I report directly to the provost. I’m always going in there like, “Okay, I know I’m about to get fired.” (laughter) Every time I go in there he’s just like, “What did you say this time?” I try to keep it real. I don’t put any air if I’m sitting in the room with all the deans or if I’m sitting with the president of the university. You know, I’m going to be myself. I don’t feel as though I should

have to change. I don't have to change my language because I try to use good language even when I'm not with them. You know, every once in a while I might slip and just be like "Dang, that was off da chain," but I just laugh with them and stuff. I truly feel, as far as my identity is concerned, that I'm the same around everybody.

Participant #5 shared her thoughts on affirmative action:

I think affirmative action just says equal opportunity for everybody. I guess to that degree, it has [helped me]. It's made people have to respect that to get me to a level to open their eyes to see that this person is qualified. If I'm qualified—I don't want you to *give* me anything—but if I'm qualified to do a job and if I meet your criteria then give me the opportunity. Affirmative action did do that. I don't think I was given any special treatment; in my lifetime the jobs that I've had just followed those guidelines. It wasn't a quotient. At one time, if you hired 8 Blacks, you had to hire 10 Whites. At one time, it was like that to meet the affirmative action guidelines but I don't think that was the intent.

When asked if she's experienced racism in the workplace, Participant #1 said:

No. Not from my peers or colleagues, no. Every now and then a student would say something ignorant but not by my colleagues, no.

When asked if the students respect her position, Participant #6 commented:

I think they do also. Sometimes there are some students that, because of the environment and the background they come from, it's hard for them to really respect your position and what you've accomplished. They come from a background where they've been sheltered or spoiled and everybody told them that

they're great. When they have a professor who's criticizing their work and they come from such an environment they come to college and take that person as the enemy. I've had that experience too where students have thought, "You're trying to bring me down" and they get the opposite instead of seeing that I'm trying to help them. I'm not trying to bring you down. For me to just go ahead, pass you, and say that this work is acceptable for scholastic achievement, I'm lying to you based on my experiences. I would be lying to you. I had a student who actually had to leave my class because she could not accept it. She was like, "You don't know what you're talking about because I take all these English professors and they pass me. I do well on the papers and they give me an A." Unfortunately, if the young lady was writing papers like that in her English classes, they were passing her because they didn't want to deal with her or they didn't care. She couldn't see that. All she could see was that this African American lady is being difficult.

Summary of Findings

Regarding the career/marriage paradigm surrounding Black professionals employed within higher education, several themes emerged from the findings of the present study. To be considered a theme, a majority of participants needed to share the same ideologies. Within all participants, a majority consisted of 4 (n=6); and for both the married and unmarried subpopulations, a majority was 2 (n=3).

Reoccurring Theme #1: Tendency to Overwork (Research Question #1)

The research participants each indicated signs of overworking and/or being overextended with outside commitments expressed through advice from mentors and

messages received from home and community to work hard, often harder than others; ranking priorities; and advice to young professionals.

The majority of participants appear to have followed in the footsteps of their mentors. Every unmarried participant referenced mentors who were also unmarried. Although Participant #4 did not have any formal mentors, the mentors she adopted were single and seemingly satisfied in their single state. A message she received from them was not to “sit around waiting to be married” and she learned to enjoy the life she has (see pages 50-51). When recalling the role her mentors played in her life, however, Participant #2 exclaimed:

That is a very scary thing! Why are all my mentors single? Is that *scary*?
(emphasis in original) I don’t have one that has a husband! (laughter) It was just “Do what you are passionate about.” That was all the advice that I ever got. Everybody was just like, “Enjoy life.” One of the things everybody tells me and I still haven’t been able to take heed to is: “Don’t let work consume you and have a life.” And to be honest, I’ve done it to a certain degree. That’s probably why it’s going on [with the doctoral program] for 7 years and I’m still writing because I’m going to do what I’m going to do. I’m going to have fun.

Participant #3 had the same realization; her mentors encouraged her educationally and professionally but they were also single:

Educationally, my mentors encouraged me, definitely. That’s why I went on to get a Master’s degree because I [originally] had no plans of doing that. I was like, “I’m graduating with my Bachelor’s and I’m ready to just go work,” but all they did was mention, “You should go get your Master’s degree because everyone

needs a Master's degree now." So I did. They encouraged me to do that. When I was in my Master's program that's when I decided to get my Ph.D. Ten years later, I finally decided to do it. My mentors [also] played a large role in my professional life. When I apply for jobs and consider if it's a good move for me, I'll consult them and ask for their thoughts and opinions, especially because they're in higher education. When I may not have wanted to take a certain position or make a certain move, they've helped me consider a different side of it. They've been very instrumental in my education and my professional life. Now my romantic life? They're single too. We have conversations about how difficult it is for us at the level that we're at. We're able to talk about it and it helps you understand that you're not the only one who feels that way in that position. That, and they haven't found a man for me. (laughing) We all have some of those same concerns and frustrations and it's good to be able to talk about that.

Two of the three married participants also had mentors who were married but the relationship among this group was not as revealing because Participant #1 was not asked about her mentors.

Reviewing advice from mentors and messages from highly regarded family and community members revealed an emphasis on education and career for the majority of respondents. Four of the six participants received messages to work hard, often stressing education and going "above and beyond" in order to succeed. Participant #5 explained:

Probably my #1 mentors would have been my parents and I lost both of my parents at a very young age. [I still keep] the things they instilled in me as far as what's important in life. Neither of my parents went to college. I was a first

generation college student. I guess coming from old-school [way of thought], they always said education was important and was the way out; "If you've got that education, you can do anything," and I accepted that. [I told myself] "I'm going to get an education, it's going to open the doors, and with that there's no limit." There is no glass ceiling. You just have to work hard and make sure you have good conviction and belief in yourself. If you don't believe in you then you can't expect others to believe in you. My parents and possibly some teachers in high school [taught me that]. I went to an all Black high school and this was the time segregation was still going on. Back then you had some Black male and female mentors that told you, "You were going to get an education," and it was a no nonsense approach. They made you understand that.

To answer if the messages of working hard were in comparison to the Majority culture and if the messages meant working harder than everyone else, Participant #5 assented (see p. 53). Participant #4 shared her thoughts:

I grew up with that mentality. It wasn't necessarily just from family members, it came from community and professors. It's somewhat of an unspoken belief within the African American community, especially that you have to work just as hard as everyone else—*harder* than everyone else. I have to say I sometimes have that mentality with students. I don't think it hurt me. I think it helped me because in my opinion what they were saying to me was "Doing just what everybody else is doing isn't good enough," and that "You always have to be excellent in what you do." You have to put forth extraordinary effort and know that it's not just about you, it's about others. It's about creating opportunities but

also being thankful for the opportunities that you've been given. ... People have to be self-motivated. People have to take personal responsibility for succeeding. You can't say, "So-in-so is lazy too." I don't care about so-in-so, you have to do better. In some ways in our country you *do* have to do better; you still *do* have to outperform (emphasis in original). ... Unfortunately in our society, everything is not on the same playing field. Other people have those same issues for different reasons. Women aren't paid as much as men and people of color are not paid as much as Caucasians. Depending on where you go or what you do you may run into those different issues. You have to be in a position where you say "Ok, no matter what happens, you may look at me and discriminate against me for whatever reason, but you don't know how hard I'm willing to work and I'm going to push through whatever barriers you set up in front of me." That's what I think they meant by "You have to do better." If things aren't handed to you, you have to work to get them and you have to be willing to work harder than the next person.

Participants 3 and 6 did not believe messages to go "above and beyond" position descriptions were necessary for success. Participant #3 commented:

I don't think I've ever felt that in my workplace because when I'm there, I do my work—I do my job and I do it well. ... [P]eople may have passed me over for opportunities to do some things because I don't have this extraverted personality where I was out there networking. That's been more of what I've seen instead of feeling like I have to go above and beyond. Higher ed. is so laid back that sometimes you're just there if you want to be there and it's easy to stay late.

Sometimes when it's time to get off, you really do need to leave because your job is just that stressful. For the most part, I don't take work home with me being in this particular position. I have found myself needing to stay late, maybe an extra half hour or something because I just want to get some things off my desk. That's a choice I made. I think it comes with my organization. If it's been a long day and I didn't have a chance to finish some letters, I'd think to myself, "Let me go ahead and do them now—it would be one less thing I have to do. I don't have anything to do after work and I don't mind staying to get that done." It helps me keep my sanity. I haven't felt pressured to stay or that it was an expectation.

Participant #6 acknowledged that such messages exist:

Just knowing some of my friends and my peers, they experience that. When I read about people who have had great success, they've always had a track record of going above and beyond.

but attributed her spiritual background for helping her resist such messages:

[Spirituality] keeps you grounded, it keeps you emotionally balanced, and it helps keep things in perspective that you don't understand. I think that's probably why you asked a question earlier, "Have you ever had a message where you had to work harder or go above and beyond to have success?" I think spirituality keeps me grounded. Because spirituality is so important to me and family is a part of that spiritual priority, I never bought into that and I never felt pressured to do that because I had a sense of who I am. Success is measured by what I deem success to be.

The impact of mentors and messages to work harder than others indicate priorities that resonate with a focus on career. For unmarried Participants 2, 3, and 4, dedication to their careers through the pursuit of doctorates resonates and relationships mentioned when listing priorities were often relationships with friends and family. Participant #2, who was dating at time of interview, realized she had other priorities than pursuing marriage with her boyfriend:

That's a scary thing—he would definitely be down there on the bottom. I would have to say it depends on where I am in my life. Right now, the Ph.D. would be the #1 priority right now. Then it would probably be the job, and then my sorority, and then the Links. Now, in the fall, if I finish this degree, my sorority would move up to the top even before the job and before everything only because like you try to progress in a job, I want to move up in my sorority. ... The scary thing is that the man is always at the *bottom* (emphasis in original). It would probably be different if I were married, but right now he's pretty much at the bottom.

Participant #4 understood her job was a priority because of her single state (noted on pp. 50-51) and also noticed reprioritizing of commitments within her married cohort:

Usually, my married cohort is a little bit more family-focused than career-focused. Sometimes in the White communities, there's this distinction between the people who, even if they get married, they're still going strong in their career. Most of the [Black] folks I know don't go as strong in their career after they have families. That focus on community, that focus on family—once they achieve that, that's the grand achievement and it reprioritizes a lot of things. One doesn't

become more important than the other. I think they achieve and have goals. I don't see that in the other [White] community. I think a lot of people nowadays are reprioritizing family above career, women especially.

Participant #1 concurred, reflecting on her single life:

I'm living in this Podunk town. I'm not really dating. I'm just working. All my friends were far away, so it was no problem for me to over-counsel a student or be too much of a resource for students because I recognize that they need it and I have time to do it.

All three married participants also acknowledged reprioritizing family before career, signaling a shift from an initial, pungent focus on career to more of a balance between career and relationship. Participant #1 indicated conflict when placing needed emphasis on her new marriage. Best illustrated in a story about accepting Yankee tickets, Participant #1 reflected:

I think, again, being so connected to my work posed a little bit of a challenge for my husband. He is very mellow, much more laid back than I am. I'm not high strung but I'm really attached to my work. ... It's more of a relationship issue but it definitely spilled over into my work life because when, and this has happened before, when it's Thursday at 11am and I'm thinking, "Okay, I have a meeting at 1:00, I have a meeting at 3:00 and then finish this report and even though it's not due until next week I'm going to send it to my boss so she can give me feedback on it." Then he calls at 11:00 and says, "I've bought Yankee tickets, the game is at 7:05 which means we need to be on the train at 6:00 which means you need to leave by 3:45 so we don't have any problems with traffic." And I'm

like, "I had planned to—." And he's like, "Right. So, in order to change your plans, what do you need to do and you probably need to start doing that right now." (laughter) And, I'm like, "Oh, I really hadn't planned on changing my plans, that's why they're called plans." And he's like, "Right. Didn't you hear me say that I've already bought the tickets? I'm not contemplating it, I bought them." (laughter) I was just like, "Right, okay." And he reminded me by saying, "You worked until 9 o'clock last night, you had programs, you had this you had that. You can leave at 4. In all honesty, there's no question about it, you can." When I agreed that I could, he said, "So what's the problem?" And he's right. This didn't pose a problem for me [before him], it's just shifting my perspective a little bit and it's helping me to achieve that work/life balance that people talk about but then they never really work for. This is a great thing and I think that it was different for people at work because they're not use to that from me.

The participants' advice to young professionals, however, consistently advocated establishing a successful and pleasant career. Five of the six participants had such responses; two of the six suggested pursuing advanced degrees. For example, Participant #3 stated:

I'd definitely encourage her to get an advanced degree. I would say, "Be open to change and be open to where you're willing to go." I'm further in my career now and a lot of people would think, "Well, if you're not married and you don't have any children you don't really have that family responsibility that's tying you down to a particular area." Yet, I haven't really been willing to branch out or go to any location, any part of the United States. I would encourage any young,

Black female professional to do that because if you limit yourself then sometimes you limit your opportunities and you limit your growth. I would definitely say, “Be a little flexible if you can and branch out and get experience in all levels—community colleges, public, private—and in different positions within the university.”

Additionally, two of the married participants endorsed the possibility of having both. Participant #5 gave advice solely dedicated to making a marriage work while Participant #6 supported determining personal desires before committing to a relationship:

You really have a foundation for what you want. Don’t wait until you get in a relationship before you figure out what you want. Before you get in that relationship, that’s something you would communicate with your partner and he would understand that. You find yourself attracted to those who have similar endeavors, appreciate them, and don’t have insecurities in that same experience. I would suggest having a foundation for what you want and go after it. When looking for that relationship, look for compatibility. I still think you should be able to do both—be fulfilled in your career and relationship.

Reoccurring Theme #2: Positive Attitudes about Marriage (Research Question #2)

In terms of marriage, the three unmarried participants desire marriage and the three married participants appear content in their marriages. Participants 2, 3, and 4 remained hopeful that they would get married although Participant #2 acknowledged that her husband might not be her current boyfriend due to obstacles within their relationship. Participants 3 and 4 expressed different levels of optimism; Participant #3 was somewhat remorseful:

(deep sigh) Oh, goodness. Right now that hope is really slim. Marriage is a goal for me, it is an option, but I think it depends on where my career path takes me. If I say location is an issue, how long am I going to stay in this town? Right now, I see it as being somewhat slim, unfortunately, but it is still a goal. I would like to get married.

Participant #4, on the other hand, was more optimistic and personified her mentor's advice to enjoy life in the moment (see pp. 55-56).

Among the married participants, Participant #1 was positive, partly because marriage helped create work/life balance:

Well, my home life definitely takes more priority now than it ever has and I'm happy about that.

Earlier in the conversation, she stated,

There's also another sort of issue with work/life balance—taking work home. I try to sneak and take work home sometimes and he is totally not with it.

(laughter) When he first moved here he was waiting tables and so he'd be gone to work at night and I'd be working, working, working. A couple of times he'd get off work early, come home and surprise me and I wouldn't be there and he would call and say, "Where are you?" I'd respond, "Oh, I'm coming right now." He'd say, "Well, where *are* you (emphasis in original)?" I'd admit that I'm in my office and he'd ask, "Why are you in your office at 8pm at night?" Or, he'd ask, "Why are you at home reading the student newspaper? I mean the student newspaper is not the bomb." I'm like, "I need to read it." He'd say, "Well, I bet The VP of Student Affairs reads the student newspaper *at school* (emphasis in

original). Early in the morning, as soon as you get there, read the paper. If that's a part of your work, if you're supposed to be knowledgeable about what's happening at the institution, why aren't you reading the paper— why aren't you reading professional journals at work instead of reading them at home?" Those are some things that I started to try to do just to get better about, leaving work at home as much as possible.

Responses from Participants 5 and 6 showed signs of satisfaction within their marriages. Participant #5 described her marriage as a partnership and her eyes lit up when describing how she knew her husband was the one.

Reoccurring Theme #3: Obstacles to Relationship Formation Exist (Research Question #3)

Participants of the present study revealed prevailing negative stereotypes of professional Black women and location/availability of men as obstacles to relationship formation. Insecure identities, job dissatisfaction and disrespect in the workplace, unrealistic expectations for an eligible partner, and misinterpretations of spiritual messages were not factors for this group.

Unrealistic Expectations for Eligible Partners

The professional Black women interviewed did not have unreasonable standards relating to their eligible partners. Equivalent degree status was not a requirement for five of the six women. They instead desired someone who was employed, was in a comparable age range, believed in an agreeable higher power, and had common sense (Participant #1); and someone who was understanding, educated but not necessarily equally educated, spiritual, supportive, not intimidated, and someone who had goals

(Participant #3). Participant #5 added appreciative and respectful, fun-loving and positive, confident and street smart to the list. He should also love her family and love and want children.

When asked if the fact that she had a Ph.D. while her husband did not caused problems within their relationship, Participant #5 responded:

No, it doesn't. You would have to know my husband. In fact, he was one of the people who pushed me—he [pushed me] along with my daughter and my son. ... They were the ones who pushed me because they said, "You have too much knowledge to stop here."

Participant #6's husband instead raised concern that he was not her educational peer:

When we had marriage counseling the counselor asked us to write down five things that you think the other individual may have some concerns about. It surprised me that he wrote down, "I don't have my Master's yet. It may bother her that I haven't finished my Master's." He did start on it. I was like, "Oh, my gosh. I didn't know that he felt that way!" Even though I don't feel like I pressured him to go back and get it, I think he automatically felt that way because I had mine and I'm in academia. I'm always talking to students about pursuing advanced degrees and mentioning that I'll probably go ahead and get a Ph.D. just so I can make a difference. Maybe getting to know me and my passion for education made him think, "She's going to really be disappointed if I don't go back and get my Master's."

Participant #2 was the lone participant who expressed conflict with degree attainment:

No, see and that's the thing, I haven't noticed it from him. I'm not sure if that's my paranoia but I think that the more education I get. I just want to make sure that [I'm sensitive], it has a lot to do with culture, and religion. It's not that you want to be submissive; you want to make sure and continue to let him think that he's the head of the household and he *is* but I think that's more of a culture thing (emphasis in original). So I think that's my thing. I don't think he's ever said anything, to say, "Okay, so you've got a degree" or that kind of thing. So, I think that's probably the big thing for me.

Misinterpretations of Spiritual Messages

Each participant identified a belief in God, even as loosely defined as a higher power (Participant #1), and regarded spirituality as a priority in their everyday lives. Participant #2 considered herself a spiritual person but had not found a church home where she worked. Participant #3 shared the same sentiment; she believed in faith and prayer but did not attend church services weekly due to location. Participant #4 was also Christian and received her Bachelor's from the only Catholic historically Black college or university, Xavier University, although she considered herself non-denominational. Comments on Participants 4's and 5's spiritual backgrounds are found on pp. 60-62.

Five of the six participants acknowledged Biblical references that commanded wives to be submissive to their husbands (Participant #1 was not asked). Four participants expressed belief that the scripture in question was easily misunderstood because it was subject to interpretation. When explaining the intent of the verses,

Participant #3 stated:

I do believe men and women have specific roles and I believe the Bible, with scripture, lays that out for us. I think sometimes we lose the interpretation of that. I don't think that means that women are supposed be so subservient and are not supposed to contribute. There are certain roles that [men and women] play and maybe if there is a "final decision" to be made, if there's a disagreement or something, maybe that might rest with the man. My belief with that is if he is leading the household according to the scripture then there wouldn't be a problem because he won't make me feel like I'm supposed to be so subservient to him. I think women are willing to "follow their husband," their mate, if he is being led in the right direction with scripture.

Participant #5 concurred:

I think your interpretation of the Bible—the Bible was written by a man, now. (laughter) Your interpretation of what they have written is how I read it. I don't think [the message of submission] that's what God meant—that's the way man wrote it. I respect the writings of the Bible but I take from the Bible what I think God meant for me as far as being a woman and how I treat my husband. I respect my husband and I think he respects me. I think he would be appalled if I came to him and said, "I'm your slave; I'm subservient to you." There are things I bring to the marriage that he does not—for example, he doesn't cook. In fact, neither one of us cooked when we got married—we struggled. I took on that role that they said women had way back when but that didn't bother me. He took on some roles too. He vacuums—I don't even touch the vacuum in my house. He cleans.

There are certain roles but you have to understand that the Bible is an interpretation.

Participant #6 also believed that “submission” should be equal, if at all:

I’ve always felt that the submissive implications in the Bible—if you do further reading, it implies that we’re both supposed to submit to each other and not one submitting in such a way that you’re under him or behind him but submitting in the sense that you complement one another. I’ve always believed that, no matter if I’ve heard the dogma mentality or the sexist mentality from the pulpit. I just felt like it was their limited understanding and limited exposure. That’s all they can interpret because they only went so far in their education too. I just have to “chew the meat and spit out the bone.” My parents knew that about me; I never really took that literally. When preachers would preach, “Wives, submit to your husbands,” I would say, “I know that I read in here that you’re equally supposed to submit” and that I’m not supposed to submit if he is not doing his part as a partner and as a spouse. I don’t think God intended for women to submit in the sense that when you’re not being treated the way you should be treated you accept disrespect. That mate is not doing what he is supposed to do according to the Bible. [Instead, it means] submit as if you both are submitting unto His Word. I don’t believe it in the sexist sense. I do not.

Negative Stereotypes

With respect to professional Black women being stereotyped negatively, the majority of participants documented characteristics such as “want[ing] too much” and being “snobbish and arrogant” (Participant #2); being “overbearing and too controlling”

(Participant #3); being “difficult, that you’re intimidating,” being “hard or that you’re overly strong” and too “independent” (Participant #4, see pp. 58-59). In response to those stereotypes, Participant #5 offered a rationale:

I think we tend to overcompensate because we have developed these standards probably based on what we’ve seen happen to other Black women in the past. We’ve probably said, “I’m not going to let that happen to me. There’s nobody that’s going to stand in my way. I’m career oriented.” Maybe sometimes we get so focused on that career because we don’t have time and the Black male is a diminishing group. Most of our Black males are in jail or we’re always looking for somebody that’s willing to move onward and upward as we are and that’s a good thing. It’s difficult to find your male counterparts that want that. I think Black women have become more selective and are taking their time to get into marriages and have families. I don’t think that’s a bad thing. You’ve worked hard as women to get where you are. ... Sometimes we lose sight and say, “I’m not going to take any stuff from any man.” That could destroy relationships because we’re so focused and won’t let anybody tell us what to do because we’re not going to let what happened to that person happen to us.

Participant #6 also recognized the negative portrayal of professional Black females and the value of having an invulnerable identity:

I think that’s why you have to know who you are. I think a lot of times we allow society to define how we’re supposed to be. If you’re getting a career then the career women are [impossible] you can’t tell them anything. You can’t do anything for them; they’re so independent. ... I had a foundation of who I was.

Insecure Identities

Participant #6's apparent secure identity also resonated within the majority of participants with regard to how they behave in the workplace. Continuing with Participant #6, when asked if she felt she had to act a certain way in the workplace, she responded:

It depends. I don't feel like I have to act and be something that I'm not but I do believe I have to adapt to situations that maybe I'm not normally accustomed to in my everyday culture or my everyday lifestyle. You adapt because it's part of the professional culture. I adapt but I don't change who I am. Even in adapting, I still stay true to who I am, what I believe, and what my convictions are.

Participant #2 was able to "keep it real" in the workplace and did not believe she had to change her language even if she were with the president of the university (see pp. 62-63). Participant #3 also shared thoughts on her identity:

I'm very secure. I don't think I've ever had to act a certain way, be a certain way, or put on a different face other than who I am. I am who I am and I'm very comfortable with it.

Participant #5's positive identity had roots in treating others working around her with respect (see pp. 84-85) and Participant #4 shared the message of respect with her students:

Knowing who you are is like knowing that I am who I am and what I say I am. I know what I think and how I feel and my beliefs and my values even if you misinterpret that or don't see who I am at the core. I tell my students this too and ask them, "Are you a kind person, are you a respectable person?" They say, "I

respect you if you respect me.” I tell them that if you’re a respectful person you should respect people even if they don’t respect you because that’s your value.

That’s what I try to live by. If I say I’m a kind person, I am kind even if you are rude. Who you are doesn’t change who I am. If I say that that is a value of mine and I let you change me then I’m not really me. That’s not to say that I never react but I’ll have to come back to that point of saying, “This is not who I am.”

Whenever you react against that then you cause yourself turmoil—that’s why you get so upset. You’ll cry or your heart will start racing because you’re going through this inner turmoil because you’re doing something that’s in conflict with what you would like to be.

Location/Availability of Men

Location/availability of men was an obstacle for all participants except Participant #5, possibly due to marriage shortly after completing college and spiritual, educational, and social fulfillment, supplied by family and career. Obstacles for her included not knowing how to make a marriage work, raising the family when her husband’s job kept him away, and establishing her own identity. Participant #5 shared the challenge of finding her identity as a mom and married woman:

He was always in the limelight. I was always Coach Henry’s* wife and when my kids came along I was Kendra’s* and Lil’ Henry’s* mom. I was like, “Where’s my identity? Who am I?” And I guess this job gives me my identity. Here, in my domain, I am who I am. I guess I’ve found my comfort zone, my identity.

* Names were changed.

Job Dissatisfaction

As a whole, the participants of the present study appeared satisfied with their work environments. They felt respected by their peers, supervisors, and subordinates, experiencing perceived discrimination only at previous employments. Participant #1 expressed gratitude for working with understanding peers as she learned to take time away from the job:

My colleagues absolutely understand, especially the ones who are married. It's just a natural progression. [If a situation arose where we needed to know], "Who's going to this weekend thing?" and I'm like, "Not me." And they're like, "See? We totally understand. You need to be at home spending time with your husband and you need to be at home spending time by yourself. You need to be home chillin'." That's pretty good...

Participant #4 also expressed appreciation for her job:

Even if I don't have everything that I want, I have a lot more than most people do. I have a Master's degree; I have a Bachelor's degree, I have a job that pays me well and allows me to sustain myself. Like I tell my students, "I could be tapping trees for maple syrup. I could be digging a ditch. Instead, I'm sitting here talking to you as a student and that's my job. Isn't that cool?" My biggest concern, like when I'm in student activities, is that we have to plan a concert or we have to plan a carnival. (*Sarcastically*) Curses! Some people have to sew people up or fight fires—it's always about perspective. The work that we do is fun work and most people don't get paid this much for doing labor-intensive work.

Concerning issues of respect, the majority of participants felt respected and believed they could be themselves in the workplace. Participant #5 stated:

No, ask my staff. (laughter) I am who I am. You get me. I'm an educated female trying to do my job. I respect my garbage man. I give them respect and they know it. We have humor in here and they know when I'm trying to get something done, when I mean business. When you treat people with respect, you get them to work as hard for you as they possibly can. You respect what they do. I know I couldn't get anything done in this office if it wasn't for my secretaries and the support staff in here because they do all the legwork. I just give them some direction, some guidance. There's a way to treat people to get everything you need done. Everybody is happy. When everybody is happy then everything is productive because everybody's working.

When asked a follow-up question, Participant #5 admitted that the respect was mutual.

The majority of participant also seemed to have positive feelings about how affirmative action advanced their careers. Participant #4 was able to identity some of the negative perceptions surrounding affirmative action, she believed her skills qualified her, not her skin color. She remarked:

I think I've earned every position that I've had. I think being a person of color has always tipped me over the scale. It's been an extra reason why I should get it. You have a 4.0, I have a 4.0. You've done work, I've done work. I'm a person of color, you're not. (excitedly) Okay! I'm there! Honestly, I think that is a valuable thing. I think people do need diversity in their university. I don't think it's necessarily because I'm Black. I believe I possess insight and skill within

multiculturalism that add to your university. I have a unique perspective and that unique perspective can be used to your advantage. Granted, once you get there, sometimes people treat you as just that by asking, "Are you working multicultural services?" "No!" I specifically did not work in multicultural services for many years for that reason. I did not want to be pigeonholed into that role. I think that we do possess certain skills and it is valuable to be a person of color, someone who brings a different dynamic to the university. It's not always easy being in that role. While you know the benefit, some people discount that benefit and think that it is just because you are this or you are that that you have this job. No, I do my work just like everyone else but I have something else that they also wanted. Luckily for you, I have all of it. You often have to prove that you're not just there for affirmative action once you get into the university even though affirmative action oftentimes helps you in achieving that position.

Participant #3 equally believed being Black helped along her career path; however, she possessed the necessary credentials:

I think my peers definitely respect my position being that it is judicial affairs. People always say, "Ooh. Yeah," because you're dealing with student discipline and you see a lot and we have to deal with a lot. As far as affirmative action, I'm sure being a female and being a female of color has definitely helped me in my growth and getting certain positions because diversity is a key issue. It's a big topic and so everybody wants to diversify. All of the institutions that I've worked for have been predominately White institutions. I'm pretty sure being a woman of color has definitely helped me. I also believe that I have the experience, the

educational credentials, and the career path that allowed [employers] to put me in those positions too.

Participant #5's response is found on page 63 of this document; Participants 1 and 2 were not asked.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The challenge of the present study was to reveal potential obstacles to balancing career and fostering relationships that may end in marriage as perceived by professional Black women employed in higher education. As noted in Chapter 1 with the limitations of the study, the findings are generalizable as descriptions of what any professional Black woman in higher education can or might experience with regards to the career/marriage balance, given that she is engaged in a similar set of circumstances. In identifying these potential obstacles, the researcher was able to make suggestions for future research and institutional leaders.

Significance of the Findings

In the style of interpretative commentary, indicated are “details and meanings from the research that were salient for the author” (Merriam, 2002, p. 22). The findings presented several inconsistencies and many more consistencies with the review of literature. Noteworthy findings and themes related to the research questions are presented below.

Research Question #1: To what level is the either/or paradigm of career vs. marriage still relevant to Black females employed in higher education?

The review of recent literature suggests a continued career vs. marriage dichotomy for professional Black females. Black women enroll in college at higher rates than Black men and receive advanced degrees more frequently (Cole; 2008; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007; Harvey, 2002). Simultaneously, with an increase in education, Black women experience higher rates of employment and earn wages almost equal to that of Black men (Malveaux, 2008).

As Bandura (as cited in Stitt-Gohdes, 1997) suggested, mentorship and role modeling impacted the women interviewed for the present study as participants embodied lifestyle characteristics of their mentors. Every unmarried participant referenced mentors who were also unmarried and the majority of married participants referenced married mentors. Four of the six participants received messages with an emphasis on education and career from mentors and highly regarded family and community members. Stitt-Gohdes (1997) confirmed the power of these messages to affect self-efficacy and Berkowitz and Padavic (1999) acknowledged similar career-driven outcomes of such messages. Not unlike the Center for Women Policy Studies' (1999) findings, the majority of participants felt a need to go "above and beyond" in order to succeed.

Research Question #2: What are the perceptions of Black female professionals employed in Higher Education concerning the concept of marriage?

Although Francese (2004) found that the economic disadvantages to marriage were great, rendering remaining single more attractive for a growing number of

Americans, the unmarried participants of the present study indeed desired marriage and the married participants seemed content within their marriages.

Research Question #3: What are some specific barriers Black females employed in Higher education face when it comes to forming relationships that may end in marriage?

Whereas Hattery and Smith (2007), Rubenstein (1997), and Manning (1995) determined cohabitation was in part responsible for the increases in marriage age for women, unmarried participants of the present study did not indicate engaging in cohabital relationships. Barriers to relationship formation included location and availability of eligible partners for the majority of participants. Benjamin (1991) associated employment for Blacks at predominantly White institutions with social isolation and participants acknowledged a lack of social, spiritual, and intellectual opportunities. Embedded in social opportunities was the availability of eligible partners that the participants defined as intelligent men but not necessarily only men possessing degrees.

Like McAdoo (2007) suggested, the participants of the current study all had a solid spiritual foundation, evident through acknowledging a higher power and ranking spirituality as a number one priority (except Participant #1). The participants, however, believed messages of submission indicated in the Bible were subject to interpretation and therefore did not have a profound impact on relationship formation.

Contrary to the Center for Women Policy Studies' (1999) report, the majority of participants in the present study portrayed secure identities with their behavior at work tailored toward professionalism, if tailored at all. The majority of participants also

expressed working in positive environments free from discrimination. They felt respected by superiors and peers alike and believed credentials and experience made them qualified for their positions. The negative attitudes associated with affirmative action that Dyson (2007) and Roberts (2006) recognized were not experienced by the participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Future research in this area should be conducted using a larger sample of participants, a few at each school for an expanded number of institutions nationwide. Doing so would provide a broader perspective on the career/marriage balance for professional Black women.
2. Future research should include the experiences of recent Master's degree recipients in entry-level positions. Researchers could then assess factors that attract young professionals to work at institutions where limited opportunities for social, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation exist.
3. To complete the other half of the picture, future research should include the experiences of professional Black men. The researcher would then be able to discover their perceptions of themselves and other professional Black men. Do Black men in higher education experience similar career/marriage balance issues?
4. Future research could also include the experiences of other professional minority women and compare those experiences to those of White women in similar positions. Data obtained would enhance our understanding of the career/marriage balance for professional Black women.

Recommendations for Institutional Leaders

1. Hiring processes should be conducted with the needs of minority populations in mind, not just Black women. Members of selection committees should be sensitive to diversity issues and have an honest conversation about available social, spiritual, and intellectual opportunities in the community with the candidate.
2. Employers should establish a system to recognize and appreciate professional Black women's contributions to their positions without encouraging them to overwork.
3. Employers should promote healthy lifestyles for professional Black women through noticing and discouraging detrimental habits such as staying late and highlighting opportunities to utilize leave days as outlined in their benefits package.

Conclusion

The issue of career/marriage balance for professional Black women employed in higher education was relevant; findings from the present study specified obstacles to balancing career and fostering relationships that may end in marriage.

Negative stereotypes used to classify professional Black women persist although somehow the majority of participants in the present study were still able to have a secure identity. Those secure identities translated well in the workplace as they felt comfortable being themselves. Also, perceived disrespect and discrimination were not factors for participants of the present study; they described their current work environments positively. In that, they felt respected by peers, supervisors, and subordinates alike.

Additionally, the majority of participants attributed their employment to possessing the required credentials and experience; affirmative action worked to benefit both the employer and the employee.

Stated priorities, advice to young professionals, advice from mentors, and implicit or explicit messages to succeed, however, all contributed to the tendency to overwork. Overworking undoubtedly leaves little time for other interests such as forming romantic relationships, as was modeled by the participants' mentors. Interestingly, unmarried participants had unmarried mentors. As presented here, overworking created an imbalance that focused more on career than other, more personal pursuits. Unmarried participants, however, hoped to someday marry and married participants seemed content within their marriages.

Although all of the participants were spiritual people, Biblical messages of submitting to husbands were subject to interpretation for the majority. Their interpretations, then, leaned in favor of equal submission within the actual or desired relationship. Concerning expectations of an eligible partner, the majority of participants did not name equivalent degree status as necessary; however, location/availability of eligible men remained an obstacle.

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APPENDIX A

For IRB use only
IRB File No.: _____
Date received: _____
Approval expires: _____

Form A

Eastern Illinois University
Institutional Review Board

NEW APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Federal regulations and Eastern Illinois University's IRB policy require that all research involving humans as subjects be reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the commencement of the data collection. Approval of this project by the IRB only signifies that the procedures adequately protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

1. Title of Project: An Examination of the Perceptions of Professional Black Women in Higher Education in Relation to the Factors that Influence their Thinking Concerning the Concept of Marriage

2. Principal Investigator*: Temetria D. Hargett

Status: ☐ Faculty ☒ **Student*** ☐ EAP Staff ☐ Other—specify: _____

*Note: Students engaging in research are required to have a faculty sponsor or executive, administrative, or professional (EAP) staff sponsor. List sponsor below.

Mailing address: 1907 4th St./ Charleston, IL 61920

Phone: (271) 581-5431 E-mail: tdhargett@eiu.edu

Department or Unit Counseling and Student Development

Has PI completed training (on-line tutorial for certification)? ☒ **Yes** ☐ No

All PI's, Co-PI's and sponsors must complete the "On-line Training Tutorial for Certification" prior to IRB approval.

Co-Investigator or Sponsor: Dr. Richard L. Roberts

Status: ☒ **Faculty** ☐ Student ☐ EAP Staff ☐ Other—specify: _____

Mailing address: EIU 2102 Buzzard Hall / 600 Lincoln Ave. Charleston, IL 61920

Phone: (217) 581-2400 E-mail: rlroberts@eiu.edu

Department or Unit: Counseling & Student Affairs

Has Co-PI or sponsor completed training (on-line tutorial for certification)? ☒ **Yes** ☐ No

List additional co-investigators, including above information, on a separate sheet.

3. Level of Review Sought: ☐ Exempt (submit Form B) ☐ Expedited (submit form C) ☒ **Full Committee**

4. Is this research being conducted to meet requirements of a course or to complete an academic degree?

Yes (do NOT submit your dissertation or thesis proposal) ☐ No

5. Estimated Project Starting Date: 1/01/2008 Estimated Project Completion Date: 6/31/2008

6. Extramural Funding:

Principal Investigator of Contract or Grant: N/A

Funding Source: _____

Contract or Grant Title: _____

Contract or Grant Number: _____

7. Indicate the categories of subjects and controls to be included in the study: Check ALL that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/> Abortuses/Fetuses	<input type="checkbox"/> Patients
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisionally Impaired	<input type="checkbox"/> Prisoners
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisionally Impaired (Institutionalized)	<input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant Women
<input type="checkbox"/> Minors (17 yrs or less)—Give age range: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Students
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Normal Volunteers	

8. Approximate number of human subjects: 5

9. Indicate which of the categories listed below accurately describes this protocol:

☒ Not greater than minimal risk

☐ Greater than minimal risk, but presenting the prospect of direct benefit to individual subjects

☐ Greater than minimal risk, no prospect of direct benefit to individual subjects, but likely to yield generalizable knowledge about the subject's disorder or condition

☐ Research not otherwise approvable, but presents an opportunity to understand, prevent, or alleviate a serious problem affecting the health and welfare of subjects

10. Does this research involve any of the following? (Check all that may apply)

☐ Past, present, or future physical health of the participants

☐ Mental health (as defined in DSM-IV TR)

☐ Provision of health care to the participants

☐ Past, present, or future payments for the provision of health care to the participants

If any of the above categories are checked, please refer to Appendix 4, HIPAA Information, in the EIU Policy and Procedures for the Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

11. Will a public use data file be created? ☐ Yes **No**

12. Complete all items from the Research Description section, which follows this application form.

Investigator Assurance

I certify that the information provided for this project is correct and that no other procedures will be used in this protocol. I agree to conduct this research as described in the attached supporting documents. I will request approval from the IRB for changes to the study's protocol and/or consent forms and will not implement the changes until I receive IRB approval for these changes.

I will comply with the IRB policy for the conduct of ethical research. I will promptly report significant or adverse effects to the IRB in writing within 5 days of occurrence. I will be responsible for ensuring that the work of others involved with this project complies with this protocol. I will complete, on request by the IRB, the Continuation Request or Completion of Research Activities Forms.

Principal Investigator's Signature

Date

Faculty or EAP Staff Sponsor Assurance (required when a student is the PI)

This is to certify that I have reviewed this research protocol and that I attest to the scientific merit of this study and the competency of the investigator(s) to conduct the project. I assure that the investigator(s) is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects. I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress and compliance with IRB policy for the conduct of ethical research.

Faculty or EAP Staff Sponsor's Signature

Date

RESEARCH DESCRIPTION

Provide responses to the following items and submit your responses along with Form A. Each response should be numbered or labeled to correspond to the following items. If an item does not apply to your research project, simply indicate "Not applicable." The research description (answers to all of the items below) should not exceed 5 type-written single-spaced pages. Use a font size of 11 or larger.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. DESCRIPTION—Provide a brief description in layperson's terms of the proposed research. Include the purpose and research questions/hypotheses.

The purpose of the present study is to examine the perceptions of Black professional women in Higher Education in relation to the factors that influence their thinking around the concept of marriage. The research questions are as follows:

- What are the perceptions of Black female professionals employed in Higher Education concerning the concept of marriage?
- What are some specific barriers Black females employed in Higher Education face when it comes to forming relationships that may end in marriage?
- To what level is the either/or paradigm of career vs. marriage still relevant to Black females employed in Higher Education?

2. DISSEMINATION—Describe how the results of the research will be disseminated.

Dissemination includes, but is not limited to: honor's, master's or doctoral theses; presentation at a scientific/professional meeting or conference; submission to or publication in a scientific/professional journal (paper or electronic); and internet postings.

Results of the research will be disseminated through completion of a Master's thesis and through presentation or publication in a professional journal. This research may also be used as the groundwork for future study.

METHODOLOGY

3. **PARTICIPANTS**—Describe the characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, health status) of the subject population whom you are targeting and the approximate number of participants. Provide exclusion and inclusion criteria. Will there be any special populations (see 45 CFR 46, subparts B, C, and D), such as children, mentally incapacitated individuals, prisoners, or others whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question included?—If yes, explain the rationale for their inclusion.

Participants of the study will include five female Black professionals (defined as possessing a Ph.D. or as current employment as a director or dean) working at colleges and universities in the Midwest. Age and health status are insignificant for the purpose of this study. This group is being targeted to examine their perceptions about their personal marriage decision and to further gain insight to the potential barriers to marriage for this group.

4. **RECRUITMENT**—Describe how you will identify and recruit prospective subjects. Attach a draft or final copy of any planned advertisements, flyers, and letters to potential subjects.

Participants will be contacted based on recommendations from their peers, otherwise known as the snowball sampling technique. This technique relies on research subjects to identify others to become members of the sample.

5. **LOCATION OF STUDY**—Identify specific sites or agencies to be used. For research conducted at a facility other than one owned and operated by Eastern Illinois University, additional information is required.

- a. **Non-federally funded research**—If the research project will not receive federal funds, a letter from the appropriate administrator of each facility should be submitted on the facility's letterhead stationary and should contain the following: agreement for the study to be conducted; identification of someone at the site who will provide information about appropriateness for its population; assurance of adequate capabilities to perform the research as approved by the IRB; and if applicable, assurance that facility personnel involved in data collection have appropriate expertise and will follow IRB approved procedures. If the approval letters are not available at the time of IRB review, IRB approval will be contingent upon receipt of the letters.
- b. **Federally funded research**—If the research project receives federal funds from an agency such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), each study site must have a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). FWAs are a requirement of OHRP or NIH and not EIU's IRB or EIU's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. EIU has negotiated a FWA. Contact ORSP for the information to enter on the funding agency's application form regarding FWA documentation. If the study is a collaborative project and another organization in addition to EIU is engaged in human subjects research (as defined by DHHS), then the PI must obtain information on the other organization's FWA and provide it in this section of the EIU application. A search for another organization's FWA may be found at OHRP's web site, <http://ohrp.cit.nih.gov/search/asearch.asp#ASUR>.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, all interviews will be conducted by the PI on three college and university campuses in the Midwest. The principal investigator plans to visit Indiana State University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and University of Illinois at Urbana – Champaign.

6. INSTRUMENTS, RESEARCH MATERIALS, RECORDS—Identify the sources of research material (e.g., specimens, records, data) to be obtained from subjects. Indicate whether the material or data will be obtained specifically for research purposes or whether use will be made of existing specimens, records, or data. **If applicable, attach a copy of all questionnaires, tests, surveys, or other materials to be administered to the subjects;** describe the setting and mode of administration (e.g., group, telephone, individual); describe the duration of administration, intervals of administration (if multiple administrations), and overall length of participation.

Participants will be interviewed individually to collect data about their personal lives related to their thoughts about marriage. Material will be collected by voice recordings on a cassette. The data will be used specifically for the intended research and destroyed upon research completion. The estimated range of each interview is 1 – 2 hours, to be administered in one sitting. Participation is limited to one session; however, follow up emails for member checking may be included. Sample interview questions include:

- What were some of the obstacles you face(d) surrounding relationship formation?
- How hopeful are you that someday you'll get married if marriage is a goal for you?
- What are some of the stereotypes facing professional Black women concerning relationship formation?
- What are some of the trends you're noticing in your cohort of Black professionals concerning relationships?
- Given your responsibilities, which take priority for you?
- Citing your previous experiences, what advice would you give a young Black female in your position?

7. PROCEDURES—Describe the study design and research procedures that will be followed. Identify all procedures that will be carried out with each group of subjects. If applicable, differentiate between procedures that involve standard or routine procedures for care or treatment from those which will be performed specifically for the conduct of this research project.

The proposed study is designed qualitatively using in-depth interviewing methods. The PI will schedule interviews with the research subjects, transcribe those interviews, and analyze the information received. Initially, the PI will email or call the volunteers to schedule interview times and dates. The PI will also inform subjects that their participation is fully voluntary and they are not required to answer questions that make them uncomfortable.

8. DATA COLLECTION, STORAGE, AND CONFIDENTIALITY—Describe how data will be collected and recorded. If subjects are identifiable by name or other means, explain special steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Describe how data will be stored during the study and how it will be secured. Delineate who will have access to the data or to subject identifiers. Describe what will happen with data from subjects who formally withdraw from the study. Describe what will happen to the data when the research has been completed. [Note: Records (e.g., signed informed consent forms, data) relating to the research project

must be retained for at least three years after completion of the research. See 45 CFR 46.115(b)]

If all or some of the subject(s) of the proposed research will be audio or videotaped, justify why the use of audio or videotaping is necessary to the study. Who will have access to the tapes and for what purposes? Where will the tapes be stored and what security measures will be taken to prevent unauthorized persons from accessing the tapes? What are your plans for the ultimate use and disposal of the tapes?

Data will be collected via an audio cassette recorder and written notes. Taping the interviews ensures an accurate account of what was said and allows the PI to stay true to the participants words. A numbering system will be used so the PI is able to accurately link subject responses and still maintain subject confidentiality. The PI and co-investigator (thesis chair) will have access to the interview transcriptions and tapes. The data collected from research subjects who chose to withdraw from the study will be shredded upon notification of their decision not to continue in the study. After the research has been completed, the signed consent forms and the interview tapes and transcriptions will be retained in a safety deposit box for three years and then destroyed.

9. **INFORMED CONSENT**—Describe the informed consent procedures to be followed, including circumstances under which consent will be sought and obtained, who will seek it, and the method for documenting consent. If minors will be included, refer to 45 CFR 46.408 for information regarding parental consent and minor's assent. **Include applicable informed consent and child assent forms for review purposes. If the informed consent process is to be waived, or if written consent or a signed informed consent is not to be obtained, specifically point this out and complete and submit Form I, Request for Waivers of Informed Consent [see 45 CFR 46.116(d) and 45 CFR 46.117(c)].**

The PI will have an informed consent form that she will review with each participant so that they may understand what is being asked of them and the risks, if any, that may be associated with the study (See Appendix A). The participants will be asked to sign the form to show that they have consented to the research.

RISKS/BENEFITS

10. **RISKS**—Describe the short-term and long-term potential risks (physical, psychological, social, legal, or other) to subjects and assess their likelihood and seriousness. Where appropriate, describe alternative treatments or procedures that might be advantageous to the subjects.

Risks to participation in the present study include possible psychological discomfort in discussing the research topic. The PI will refer the subject to her university's Employee Assistance Program for counseling if any emotionally taxing consequences occur.

11. **SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**—Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks, including risks to confidentiality. Where appropriate, discuss provisions for ensuring necessary medical or professional intervention in the event of adverse effects to

the subject(s) and attach a referral list. Also, where appropriate, describe the provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects.

Confidentiality will be secured by using a numbering system to identify participants. The PI will ensure safety by allowing the interview to progress only so far as it does no apparent harm. Should a participant express psychological discomfort, the PI will refer the subject to her Employee Assistance Program.

12. **BENEFITS**—Describe the potential direct benefits subjects may receive as a result of participating in this research. Describe the potential benefits to society that may be expected from this research.

Benefits to participation in the present study include the satisfaction of knowing she is contributing to the research efforts of a graduate student and giving insight into the lives of Black female professionals, an area not widely studied.

13. **BENEFITS VS. RISKS**—Discuss why the risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits to subjects and in relation to the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result.

The PI anticipates low risk to discussing the research topic. Benefits from this study reasonably outweigh the risks because the information gathered in this study may lead to future research on the topic.

14. **INCENTIVES AND RESEARCH RELATED COSTS**—Describe the incentives, if any, being offered to subjects for their participation in the research study. If monetary compensation is offered, indicate how much subjects will be paid and describe terms of payment. Describe what will be done if subjects withdraw before completion of the research (e.g., will monetary payments be prorated or payment in full?). Also, if applicable, describe any costs which will be accrued by the subjects as a consequence of participating in the research.

Monetary compensation is not being offered for participation in the present study. There is also no penalty if subjects choose not to participate in the study or if they choose to withdraw from the study.

QUALIFICATIONS OF INVESTIGATORS

15. Briefly describe the qualifications of the investigators(s) conducting this research project. As a College Student Affairs graduate student, coursework, specifically in research methods and individual and group counseling, have prepared the PI for this research project. Research methods allowed the PI to study qualitative design nature and ethics within research. Individual and group counseling equipped the PI with knowledge of effective interviewing techniques that allow for open, honest, and non-harmful communication. In addition, the Principal Investigator is a Black female hoping to become a professional within Higher Education.

OTHER (Provide information regarding the following if applicable)

16. **DATA SAFETY AND MONITORING FOR NIH SPONSORED RESEARCH**—The National Institutes of Health policy requires that grantees have in place procedures for data

safety monitoring of clinical trials. The IRB is required to review and approve the data safety monitoring plans. For NIH funded clinical trials, include a description of the Data Safety Monitoring Plan.

Not applicable.

17. Describe any requirements imposed by funding agencies that are not already covered in this application.

Not applicable.

APPENDIX B

Email 1:

Hello Dr. ____! My name is Temetria Hargett and I'm a second-year graduate student in the Counseling and Student Development department at Eastern Illinois University. I'm writing to solicit your participation in my thesis project titled: *Career vs. Marriage: Perceptions of Professional Black Women Employed in Higher Education*.

I've attached the consent to participate in research form for your review and I will gladly answer any questions you may have. If interested in participating, please email a few dates and times you're available to interview between April 7th and April 25th. The interview would last 1-2 hours and I value the time you'd take away from your busy schedule.

If you do not wish to participate, will you contribute names of colleagues whom the topic of study might interest?

Thank you for considering this opportunity,

Temetria Hargett

Eastern Illinois University
Associate Resident Director
McKinney Hall

Email 2:

Hello Dr. ____! My name is Temetria Hargett and I'm a second-year graduate student in the Counseling and Student Development department at Eastern Illinois University. I'm writing to solicit your participation in my thesis project titled: *Career vs. Marriage: Perceptions of Professional Black Women Employed in Higher Education*. You were recommended by _____. He thought you'd be great for this study!

I've attached the consent to participate in research form for your review and I will gladly answer any questions you may have. If interested in participating, please email a few dates and times you're available to interview between April 14th and April 25th. The interview would last an hour at most and I value the time you'd take away from your busy schedule. I can accommodate if an interview after 5pm would work best.

If you do not wish to participate, will you contribute names of colleagues whom the topic of study might interest?

Thank you for considering this opportunity,

Temetria Hargett

Eastern Illinois University
Associate Resident Director
McKinney Hall

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Career vs. Marriage: Perceptions of Professional Black Women Employed in Higher Education

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Temetria Hargett, a graduate student from the Counseling and Student Development Department at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are identified as a female Black professional (defined as possessing a Ph.D. or currently employed as a director or dean) in Higher Education.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to examine the perceptions of Black professional women in Higher Education in relation to the factors that influence their thinking around the concept of marriage.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an in-depth interview of approximately 1 to 2 hours at your University,
- Allow the researcher to record the interview for later transcription (tapes will then be destroyed), and
- Correspond in a follow-up email, phone conversation, or letter.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher anticipates low risk to discussing the research topic. Risks to participation in the present study include possible psychological discomfort in discussing the research topic. If the participant needs to further discuss the topics or needs to process the materials at greater length, the researcher can refer the participant to his/her University's Employee Assistance Program.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Benefits to participation in the present study include the satisfaction of knowing she is contributing to the research efforts of a graduate student and giving insight into the lives of Black female professionals, an area not widely studied.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means storing data in a safety deposit box. The information transcribed will be stored in a password protected computer for confidentiality. Only the researcher and her Thesis Chair will have access to the participant's information. No other party will have access. All audio tape recorded in the interview process will be destroyed immediately after completion of research.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Temetria Hargett

PHONE: (217) 581-5431

ADDRESS: 1907 4th Street/ 90 McKinney Hall
Charleston, IL 61920

EMAIL: tdhargett@eiu.edu

FACULTY SUPERVISOR:

Dr. Richard Roberts

(217) 581-2400

Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL 61920

rroberts@eiu.edu

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study; my approval is IRB number 08-010.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

Research Questions

1. To what level is the either/or paradigm of career vs. marriage still relevant to Black females employed in Higher Education?
 - a. Given your responsibilities, which take priority for you?
 - b. Citing your previous experiences, what advice would you give a young Black female in your position?
 - c. Will you share the role mentors played in your educational, professional, or romantic life?
 - d. Have you ever received messages from home that you have to work harder than everyone else to succeed or from work that you must outperform in order to be recognized or promoted?

2. What are the perceptions of Black female professionals employed in Higher Education concerning the concept of marriage?
 - e. Did you think you were going to find a husband in college?
 - f. What are some of the trends you're noticing in your cohort of Black professionals concerning relationships?
 - g. How hopeful are you that someday you'll get married if marriage is a goal for you?

3. What are some specific barriers Black females employed in Higher Education face when it comes to forming relationships that may end in marriage?
 - h. What were some of the obstacles you face(d) surrounding relationship formation?
 - i. What are some of the stereotypes facing professional Black women concerning relationship formation?
 - j. What is your definition of an eligible partner?
 - k. What role does spirituality play in your life?
 - l. What are your thoughts on the Bible's guidance for relationships?
 - m. How accessible are your opportunities for social, spiritual, and intellectual stimulation?
 - n. How secure are you with your identity as a Black female? Do you feel as though you've ever needed to "act a certain way" in the workplace?
 - o. Do you feel as though your peers respect your position? Has affirmative action helped you get where you are or did you earn the position?
 - p. From what you can tell, have you experienced racism or felt disrespected in the workplace?
 - q. Do your supervisors respect you as an employee? What about the students?